

The Mystery of Phanaticism.
OR, THE
ARTIFICES
OF
DISSENTERS
To Support their
SCHISM.

Together with the
Evil and Danger of them.

Set forth in several
Letters to a FRIEND.

Wherein is made appear, That nothing but the
Subtilty and Cunning of their Teachers, doth
now hinder the People from Conformity.

By a Divine of the Church of England.

2 Cor. 2. 11. *We are not ignorant of [their] Devices.*

THE SECOND EDITION Corrected.

L O N D O N,

Printed for T. Leigh, at the Peacock in Fleetstreet;
and R. Knaplock, at the Angel and Crown in
St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1698.

Copy of Reverend Mr. Mathew
Hole S S B Sometime fellow
of Exeter Coll Oxon. Now
Rector of Inkegursley Somerset^{re}.

THE PREFACE.

THE DISSENTING Cause being in a great measure deserted in Point of Argument, is now merely upheld by Artifice; and what it wants of Reason and Truth, is supplied by Subtilty and Cunning. And because the Discovery hereof may help to undeceive and open the Eyes of some well-meaning, but unwary People, it may not be altogether an unprofitable Task, to lay open these Devices, that they may the better see how they are gull'd, and be the more aware of the Imposture.

Truth (we know) is willing to be seen with open Face, and hath that Native Beauty and Lustre, that needs no Paint or Varnish to recommend it: But Error hath so foul and ugly a Complexion, that makes it need and covet a Vizard to hide its Deformity, and can only be set forth by False and Artificial Colours. We read of some mens Works, that they cannot bear the Light, and therefore come not to it, lest their deeds should be reprov'd: Such as these do but act a Part in Religion; and only play the Zealous and Devout; and are indeed to be shunn'd and detested of all Men,

Joh. 3.20.

as the worst of Impostors ; for they at once mock God, and deceive the People, and prostitute the Best Things to the worst and vilest Purposes.

And that too many such there are, our unhappy Age can sadly testify : For may we not daily see the Sons of Craft acting under various Disguises, and wheedling the People with their Pious Frauds ? Do they not work upon the Weakness of some, the Wilfulness of others, and the Discontents of all, to serve their own Ends upon them ? And like Spiritual Mountebanks, cry up their Infallible Medicines for the Cure of Souls, merely to draw in and deceive the unthinking Multitude. They are sufficiently acquainted both with the Ignorance and the Headiness of the Vulgar, and apply themselves to them accordingly ; following that known Rule, Si populus vult decipi, decipiatur. With this untemper'd Mortar do the Architects of Schism build their Babel, laying Hay and Stubble upon the Foundation of Christianity, which they at the same time undermine by their Hollownefs and Hypocrisie.

Our Blessed Saviour forewarned his Followers of such false Teachers, that should come to
 Mat. 7. 15. them in sheeps cloathing, that is, with soft and smooth Pretences, but inwardly were ravening wolves, dividing the Flock, that they may the more easily devour them, and making a Prey of them whom they pretend to feed. These he afterward describ'd by their divided
 Matt. 24. Dialect, one saying, Lo, here is Christ, and 23, 26, another, there. And when things come to
 this

(iii)

this pass, that one saith, Behold, he is in the field; another, he is in the secret chambers; a third, in the Conventicle; 'tis time to hearken to our Saviour's Advice, Believe them not, and go not after them.

The Apostle likewise foretold of such Seducers, that would arise in the latter days, Acts. 20. speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them: Describing them sometimes by their despising dominions, and speaking evil of dignities: At other times more plainly pointing at them, by their creeping into houses, and leading captive silly women laden with divers lusts; thus beguiling the Weaker Sex, who being lead more by their Passions than Reason, are more easily seduc'd by them. And therefore we are exhorted, To mark them that cause divisions, and avoid them; for they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and with good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.

And as Christ and his Apostles have thus forewarned us of false Teachers, who by their subtle Insinuations would (if it were possible) deceive the very elect; so have they foretold the Giddiness and Instability of some among the People, who would hearken too much to their false Insinuations, and be easily deluded by them. These are described by their Unwillingness to hear and endure sound doctrine, and heaping to themselves teachers, having itching ears; by which means they would turn from the truth, and be turned unto Fables. Both these

these Predictions are unhappily fulfilled in our Days, which affords too many sad Instances both of the cunning Craftiness of some who lie in wait to deceive, and the too great Easiness and Willingness of others to be deceived by them.

So that we are certainly fallen into those perilous Times, in which the Apostle foretold, that
 2 Tim. 3. men should be lovers of themselves, tray-
 1, 2, &c. tors; heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of Godliness, but denying the power thereof; of whom he wills all wise men to beware, and to turn from them.

Indeed there hath been no Age since the Apostles, wholly free from Schismaticks and Impostors; but perhaps none ever afforded such Swarms of them, as our unhappy days, in which, like the Flies of Egypt, they are still buzzing in the ears of the people, and like the Frogs croaking in all corners of the Land.

It will not therefore be amiss, to expose to Publick View the Frauds and Fallacies of false Teachers, to lay open the Evil and Danger of them, that if we cannot wholly cure the Schism, we may preserve as many as possible from the Contagion of it.

Farewell.

The

The CONTENTS.

Letter I.

THeir great Zeal in making Proselytes, Page 1

Letter II.

Their pretence to greater Light and Knowledge than other men, p. 11

Letter III.

Their pretence to greater Strictness and Sanctity than other men, p. 22

Letter IV.

Their pretence to Purer Ordinances, and a more Spiritual way of Worship, p. 32

Letter V.

Of their crying up Peace and Unity, tho' all their Actions tend to destroy and undermine them, p. 42

Letter VI.

Their Censuring the Lives and Actions of those within the Church, the better to commend theirs who Dissent from it, p. 51

Letter VII.

Of their calling the wise Injunctions of our Superiors, by the odious Name of Impositions, p. 62

Letter VIII.

Of their keeping the People in Ignorance of the Nature and Danger of Schism,

p. 70

Letter

Letter IX.

*Of their Misinterpreting and Wresting the
Scriptures to serve their own purpose,*
p. 81

Letter X.

*Their confining the Offices of Kindness and
Charity to those of their own Sect,*
p. 89

Letter XI.

*Their working upon the Weakness, the Wil-
fulness, and Discontents of the People,
to serve their own Ends upon them,*
p. 97

Letter XII.

Their pretence to Christian Liberty, p. 106

Letter XIII.

*Their pretence to better means of Edifica-
tion,* p. 117

Letter XIV.

*Their setting up and encouraging little pri-
vate Schools of Philosophy,* p. 126

Postscript.

*Their settling and maintaining a secret
Correspondence among themselves ; with
a Copy of one of their late Letters,*
p. 135

The End of the CONTENTS.

LET-

LETTER I.

S I R,

I Remember my Promise of giving you some account of the Artifices of Dissenters to support their Schism: And though this Mystry of Iniquity hath some depths and intriegues that are out of the reach of a vulgar eye; yet there are other Devices that lie more open, and may be easily discern'd by an ordinary Observer.

And here the

First thing that occurs to our view, is their great zeal and diligence in making Profelytes; in which they imitate, if not outdo, the zeal of the *Pharisees*, *who compass sea and land to make a profelyte.*

Matt. 23.
15.

This unwearied diligence of the *Pharisees*, is remark'd by our Saviour as an instance of their Hypocrisy.

B

And

Matt. 23.
14.

And the *Jewish* Writers tell us how they used their utmost endeavours in hunting after Profelytes, not for their good, but their own gain; that they might some way or other drain their Purfes after they had drawn them into their Sect: They spared no pains among all sorts of persons, but especially among the Richer Widows, whom by their subtle attractives they despoil'd of a great part of their Substance: The Scripture hath recorded of them; *That they devoured widows houses*, by their long Prayers; which they made to serve as a long Grace to hallow and sanctify their Oppression. In a word, they fish'd for Profelytes every where, and made a prey of all that they drew into their Net. And herein they are equall'd, if not exceeded by our Dissenting Brethren; the art and industry used by them to this purpose, being too well known to need any proof.

The chief things to be remark'd under this Head, are,

1st. The Persons of whom these Profelytes consist. 2^{dly}. Whence they are gathered: And 3^{dly}. What they are Profelyted to.

For

For the Parties on whom this Game is plaid : They are not any Persons of Education and Parts , who can see through the disguise, and discover the Imposture ; but the weak and illiterate Vulgar ; whose want of Judgment renders them the more easy and liable to seduction.

And here their great business is to flatter and humour the common People, who are the sole Props and Members of the Conventicle ; being fearful and tender of displeasing them, lest they should fly off, and *Dagon* fall with them ; and therefore we are told by a wise Observer of their ways, That the People are most truly the Guides, and that the Pastors must follow them whom they pretend to Conduct ; which shews them to be rather Men-pleasers than the Servants of God.

But whence are these Profelytes taken ? Why, out of the Parochial Established Churches, for they can be taken no where else ; and we all know that the Conventicle is made up of a few straggling Sheep gathered out of other Flocks, and drawn from the true Fold of the Catholick Church.

Now these Parochial Churches, being by the Dissenters themselves acknowledged to be true Churches of Christ ; this can be no other than gathering Churches out of Churches ; a thing severely Condemn'd by the *Puritans* of old, in the *Brownists* ; and by the *Presbyterians* of late , in the *Independents*, and other *Sectaries*. If you will peruse the Presbyterian Writings, and pirticularly the *Jus Divinum Regiminis Ecclesiastici*, the exactest Book that hath been written by them, “ You will find
 “ *this practice of gathering Churches out*
 “ *of Churches , and setting up separate*
 “ *Meetings against an Established Church,*
 “ *bitterly inveigh'd against as the Mother*
 “ *of Confusion, the Nurse of Schism ,*
 “ *and the Step mother of Edification.*

How comes the case then to be thus alter'd, That gathering Churches out of Churches , which was formerly a heinous Crime, should now become not only a harmless thing, but a necessary Duty ? And what was so fiercely disputed against as a grievous Faction should now be so earnestly contended for, as if it were the *faith once delivered to the saints* ? What is it that hath made this change ? Is Vice of a sudden turn'd into
 to

to Virtue? Or hath the Mother of Confusion chang'd the Breed, and brought forth a purer way of Worship and Devotion? No; the Mystery of it is, That the Presbyterians upon the dissolution of the Government, which they had in a great measure occasion'd, fed themselves with hopes of being uppermost, and laboured hard to bring the other Sects, that grew up under them, to the lure of their Discipline; and then setting up Altar against Altar, and gathering Churches out of Churches, were vile and abominable things; but finding themselves oppos'd, and indeed overtop'd by the Independents, and by the Re-establishment of the Church upon its ancient Foundation, utterly defeated of all their hopes, they began then to play the same game, and lest they should be left in the lurch, fell a gathering Disciples as fast as the other Sectaries. And then all their own Arguments taken from Peace and Unity, which were very strong whilst they made for Them, of a sudden lost all their force when they were turned against them. Most rare and well-grounded Divinity!

But what is it that these Industrious Men seek to make Profelytes to? Is it to the embracing of Christianity, or the practice of real Piety and Virtue? No; this were a very charitable and commendable Zeal indeed; but 'tis to a Party, a Faction; to a Schism, or Separation from a true Church, which they themselves have branded for the sink of Error, and the inlet of all Confusion. So that if the People would but open their Eyes, they might easily see their Leaders acting against their own Principles, and might condemn them out of their own mouths.

But what is the end or design of this great diligence in making Profelytes? Why, the plain design of it is the weakening the established Church by drawing the Members from it; the strengthening their own Party by adding Followers to it, and by degrees undermining the Government in Church and State, to draw the Power and Interest of both into their own hands. Great and noble designs indeed! not for the publick Good, but their own private Interest and Ambition. And yet these apparently lie at the bottom of these endeavours.

Now

Now this will lead us to consider the evil and danger of such Practices, and that as well to the Parties Profelyted, as those that Profelyte them.

St. Paul sharply rebuked this way of Profelyting, or Party-taking among the *Corinthians*, though they made some of the Apostles, yea, Christ himself to be one of the Heads of the Party; *While one saith, I am of Paul, another I am of Apollos, another I am of Cephas, another I am of Christ; are ye not carnal, and walk as men?* Yes, as the worst sort of men; for ye divide Kingdoms, rend Churches, and tear in pieces the very Body of Christ.

Our Blessed Saviour was so far from commending the Zeal of the *Pharisees* in making Profelytes to their Sect, that he pronounc'd a Woe against them for it; and withal told them, That they made them *twofold more the children of hell than themselves*. And *Josephus* tells us, that the Disciples outdid their Masters; for they not only became worse than they were before, but exceeded the *Pharisees* themselves in their Hypocrisy and Unbelief. The Imitation outwent the Original, and the Disciples encouraged by their Doctrine

Matt. 23.
15.

and Example, became much more the children of Wrath and Disobedience than they were before.

And hath it not happen'd thus with many of the Dissenters Disciples, who like apt Scholars have outgone their Masters? For when they had drawn them from the Church, Have not others started up who have drawn them from their Conventicles? Are not the several Heads of the Faction tugging hard to draw Disciples from one another? And must not the People be mightily Edified (think you) to be thus drawn about as with a Cart-rope; and led from one Sect to another by the Cords of Vanity? Yea, Have not some by this means been drawn into Atheism and Infidelity; and while the contending Parties have been striving for Profelytes, have not many lost all their Religion in the scuffle? This is too well known by woful experience. So that these cannot be term'd Profelytes of Righteousness; nor are they initiated into a Mystery of Godliness, but Iniquity, being drawn into a Schism; which if wilfully persisted in, must cut them off from the Body of Christ, and not only deprive them of the Fellowship of the Christian Church
here,

here, but for ever exclude them from the Community of the Saints hereafter?

Neither doth the danger hereof affect only the Persons seduced by them, but hath a malign influence upon a whole Church and Kingdom, and is a publick as well as a private Mischief; for every one that is drawn into a Party, is in effect listd against the Government; and he that is Profelyted to a Sect, does thereby become an Enemy to the peace and welfare of his Country: For such as these draw from the Church to support a Combination against it, and so weaken the whole by strengthening a Party.

You know it must go ill with the Body, when the Blood and Spirits which should cherish the Heart, and fortify all the other Members, leave their natural course, and run only to feed a Disease, Excrecence, or corrupt Humour: Neither can it fare better with publick Bodies and Societies, when that strength which should be united to preserve the whole, is carri'd off to support a Faction; and the bond of Peace and Unity, which should hold the parts together, is broken into several Sects and Divisions.

But

But what are the Arts that are made
use of by Dissenters to gain Profelytes,
and thereby to uphold, increase, and
propagate their Schism, the discovery of
these shall be the subject of the ensuing
Letters, I am,

S I R,

Your affectionate Friend,

A. B.

L E T.

LETTER II.

S I R,

I Gave you an account in my last, of the great diligence and industry of Dissenters in making Profelytes, and drawing Disciples after them, together with the evil and danger of their so doing. But

You are satisfied (you tell me) of this their great design in endeavouring to increase and propagate their Party ; but you would fain know by what arts and methods they effect it ; that is, how they thus lead the People by the Nose, and draw so many after them. And here to omit some of their lesser arts of inveigling the People, as by affected Tones, mimical Actions and Gestures, &c. which, you know, have a mighty force to draw the Multitude ; I say, to pass by these, I shall give you an account of some of the principal Artifices they make use of to compass their ends. And the

First

First I shall mention of these, is their pretence to greater Light and Knowledge than other Men: And herein they are the followers of a Sect in the Apostles days, known by the Name of *Gnosticks*; who were so call'd from their boasting of greater Light, and esteeming themselves the wisest and most knowing of all Persons.

Now half an Eye may see how exactly they are imitated by the Sectaries of our days, who talk much of higher Illuminations, and make frequent boasts of their greater measures and degrees of Knowledge. Nothing is more common in their Mouths, than Gospel-Discoveries, Gospel-Manifestations, new and clearer Revelations; all which are made chiefly, if not only to them; when as others (poor Souls!) are ignorant, and know nothing of these Glorious things. They delight to speak of the Darkness of former times, and what a glorious Meridian-Light is broke out in their days; which they make to shine with a brighter lustre upon them than any others. You shall often hear them pity the Ignorance of some men, who, perhaps, know more than themselves; and please themselves with the thoughts

thoughts of their higher Attainments, as if the Day-spring from high had visited them, whereas others were merely be nighted, and left to walk on still in darkness. Their Teachers too are willing enough to cherish in them this vain conceit of their great Knowledge, that they may the more admire them from whom they have it; this makes them talk of others as blind ignorant Creatures, void of any Saving-Knowledge of Christ, and the Mysteries of the Gospel; that they have Scales before their Eyes, that are never like to drop off, till they Hear their Teachers, and Espouse their Party. Thus do they applaud the clearness and perfection of their own Knowledge, and lament the lack of it in other Men, though many times much Wiser than themselves.

Now how serviceable this is to uphold and increase the Party, is obvious to observe; for the common People being incompetent Judges of true Wisdom, are easily impos'd upon by the bare semblance and appearance of it.

Besides, this so far gratifies the natural Pride and Vanity of Mens Minds, as makes them willing to hearken to those that thus soothe and flatter them.

Yea,

Yea, this Artifice hath deceived many a well-meaning Man, who though willing to know and embrace the Truth, have been unhappily misled by these false Lights, out of the ways of Truth and Peace. So that this Wile hath an easy and natural tendency to deceive, and hath done the Party great service.

But what hath been the effect of this Stratagem? Why, the Evils that have been produc'd by it are many and great.

As First ; It hath occasioned a great deal of Pride, and made many ignorant People talk and look scornfully on those that are far above them, both in Parts and Wisdom ; *Knowledge puffeth up*, saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. 8. 1. Yea, a vain Conceit of it will have the same effect, though the reality be wanting : A small matter will puff up a bubble ; and some are so prone to this Evil, that a little thing will make them look big, and apt to swell with a high opinion of their great Wisdom. This makes them Heady, Confident, and Assuming, thinking themselves wiser than their Teachers, and taking upon them to instruct their Betters, without any regard

gard to their Learning or Office ; yea, this vain conceit of Knowledge hath lifted some of them to that high degree of Arrogance, as to set up their Light within them above the Holy Scriptures, and to prefer their own Dreams before Divine Revelations. Again,

2dly. This pretence of greater Knowledge occasions great Contempt and Disobedience to Authority ; for these Opinionative Men soon become Wiser than their Governors ; they see farther into matters than all that are above them, and so can espy the errors in the Administration of Affairs : Hence you shall find them taxing the Actions of their Superiors, finding fault with their Conduct, and quarrelling with all Orders and Constitutions, that are not drawn up by their Model, and appointed as they in their great wisdom think best : They talk much of a Judgment of Discretion, which they oppose to the Judgment of their Superiors, and by the help of it can lay aside all Laws and Canons made for publick Peace and Order. And what a pernicious influence this must have, not only the nature of the thing, but our

our daily and doleful Experience may easily inform us. Moreover,

3dly. This overweening conceit of great Knowledge, makes men pragmatical medlers in things that belong not to them, invading the Office both of the King and Bishop; prying into matters of State, as if they were all Privy Councillors; and Expounding the most difficult places in Scripture with greater confidence, than the most Learned Doctors. Hence you shall see them creeping into Mens Parishes, as if none were able to Lead and Instruct their Flock, without their Assistance, and thrusting themselves into other Folks business, as if none had any understanding but themselves. Again,

4thly. This vain conceit of greater Light, makes men Obstinate and Pertinacious in their private Fancies and Opinions, though never so False and Erroneous: We know how difficult a thing it is to reclaim a Schismatick; the conceit he hath of his own Knowledge, makes him think he cannot be mistaken; the Infallibility he denies to the Pope, he assumes to himself; and vainly thinks, that if other Men did but see with his Eyes, they might soon discern
the

the Truth ; and this would make them say and do even as he takes himself to be, always in the Right ; and that 'tis not possible for so enlighten'd a Person as he to be in the Wrong ; And what hope can there be of reclaiming such a one, who is resolv'd and arm'd against Conviction? *Sceſt thou a man wiſe in his own conceit, (ſaith Solomon) there is more hope of a fool than of him, Prov. 26. 12.*

Laſtly, This vain opinion of greater Knowledge, makes them to deſpiſe, cenſure, and condemn the Actions of other Men ; for thinking themſelves only in the right, they take all others to be out of the way that go not with them ; and never ſo much as dreaming that they can be deceiv'd, pity and ſigh over others as a company of ignorant, blind, and deluded Wretches : Thus are they by this means brought fondly to applaud and admire themſelves, and to look down with contempt and ſcorn on others, though much Wiſer than themſelves. Theſe, and many other are the ſad effects of this Artiſice, and plainly proceed from Mens flattering themſelves and others with an
C opinion

opinion of their greater Light and knowledge.

Now to shew the Vanity of this pretence, we may observe,

1st. That the greatest pretenders to Knowledge, have commonly the least share of it; a smatterer in any Art or Science, that hath scarce knowledge enough to see his own ignorance, usually boasts of higher measures and degrees of it, than a Wiser Man that sees much farther into it will pretend to, who being sensible of his own defects, and how far short he comes of Perfection, is commonly more humble and modest: *A wise man (saith Solomon) feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth and is confident, Prov. 14. 16. If any man think he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know, 1 Cor. 8. 2.* We read of some that take upon them to be Teachers of others, when themselves need to be Taught the first Principles of the Oracles of God; and of others that are ever learning, but never come to the knowledge of the truth, 2 Tim. 3. 7. 'Twas well-observ'd by my Lord Bacon, " That a little Knowledge is apt to
" puff up, and make Men giddy, but a
" greater

“ greater share of it will set them right,
 “ and bring them to low and humble
 “ thoughts of themselves.

So that this pretence of greater Light, is but a covering for their deeds of Darkn^{ess}; and *if the light within them be darkn^{ess}, how great is that darkn^{ess}?* Matth. 6. 23. Beside,

2dly. This boast of greater Knowledge is a great bar to all growth and increase in it; For what need have they to labour for that, of which they think they have so great a share already? This will breed not only a neglect, but contempt of all the means of Knowledge; 'twill make them deaf to Instruction, and to shut their Eyes against the Light, though it flashes in their Faces: 'Twas wisely observ'd by the Roman Orator, *Multi ad Sapientiam pervenissent, nisi se jam, pervenisse putassent*: “ Many might have attain'd to
 “ Wisdom, were it not for a vain conceit that they had attain'd it already. And indeed, there is no such Ignorant, Arrogant, and Incurable Fop, as a Gifted Brother full of his Visions and Revelations, who pretends to be above Ordinances, and to be Wise above that which is Written.

Lastly. This vain conceit of greater Knowledge, oft-times leads to a judicial Blindness ; and they who are so apt to Reprobate others, are themselves given up to a Reprobate sense ; *that in seeing, they should see, but not perceive ; and in hearing, they should hear, but not understand.* We read of the *Gnosticks*, *That when they professed themselves to be wise, they became fools ; and being vain in their imaginations , their foolish hearts were darken'd,* Rom. 1. 21, 22. God Almighty put out that Light which they vainly pretended to, or wilfully abus'd, and suffer'd them to grope on in thick darkness. And the same Apostle tells us of others, who for *not receiving the truth in the love of it , were given up to believe a lie , and carried away with strong delusions,* 2 Thess. 2. 11. And this, 'tis to be feared, is the case of too many Sectaries in our Days , who withstand the clearest evidence of Truth , and harden their hearts against all Conviction ; nothing can make them sensible of the error of their ways, though it never so plainly appear to be so , but will obstinately persist in their evil course against all
the

the Commands of their Superiors, the Instructions of their Teachers, and the Example of Wise and Holy Men in all Ages; as if they were lull'd asleep in a fatal Security, and seal'd up under final Impenitence. Which is much lamented by,

S I R,

Yours,

A. B.

C 3

L E T.

LETTER III.

S I R,

I Find by your last, that you are sufficiently sensible what great service the pretence of greater Light and Knowledge hath done the Dissenters, and that you plainly see the falshood and malignity of that Artifice. I proceed now to a second, and that is a pretence to greater Strictness and Sanctity than other Men; and herein they are the successors of the *Pharisees*; who beside the exacter Knowledge of the Law, pretended to the exactest Observance and Obedience to it; hence we find them stil'd the *strictest sect of their Religion*, Acts 26. 5. and are said to *teach and act according to the perfect manner of the law*, Acts 22. 3. Our Saviour himself brings in one of them boasting of his greater Piety, and taking the boldness to tell God Almighty in his Prayers, *That he was not as other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or the like*, Luk. 18. 11, 12. but had led a stricter life, and practis'd

practic'd a higher sort of Righteousness than other Folk; and lest God and the world should doubt of the truth of it, he proceeds to many particulars, *viz. That he was frequent in his fasts, punctual in his tythes, liberal in his alms-deeds, &c.* And elsewhere we read of other parts of the *Pharisees* Righteousness; That they were strict observers of the Sabbath, careful of their Company for fear of being defil'd by them; long and loud in their Prayers; that they enlarg'd their Philacteries, and garnish'd the Tombs of the Prophets, as if they detested the Cruelty of their Forefathers in putting them to Death; with many other instances recorded by the Four Evangelists.

How well they are imitated by Dissenters in making a fair and plausible shew of greater Holiness, a very slender Observation may inform us; for you may easily observe them to look more Demurely, talk more Religiously, and seem to Pray more Devoutly than other Men; their seeming Zeal shall carry them many a Mile to a Conventicle, when they may hear a better Sermon at home in their own Church; yea, and set them a Repeating Sermons too which

were scarce worth the first Hearing; and thereby inculcate some Doctrines, that were much better doom'd to eternal silence and oblivion. Thus do they seek to polish the outward Garb with a fair and plausible shew of Holiness; withdrawing from others as Sinners, and not only pretending, but as to outward appearance practising too a greater Strictness.

Now how useful this Artifice is to uphold and increase a Party, is easy to discern; for the common People being led more by their Senses and Imagination, than any sound Principles of Reason, are often impos'd upon by the outside of Religion; which many times makes a more flaming and pompous shew, than the inward truth and reality of it, which residing in the Heart, lies more hid and undiscovered: By this means the *Pharisees* got a wonderful interest and influence upon the minds of the People, who by a shew of greater Religion, so drew the Hearts after them, that 'twas Proverbial among them to say, That if but Two went to Heaven, the one would be a *Scribe*, and the other a *Pharisee*: And any ordinary Eye may see our Dissenters drawing Disciples,

Disciples, and increasing their Parties by the same method.

But have these great pretenders all this while any more Religion than other Folk? No; they have more of the shew, but not of the substance; having a *form of godliness*, as the Apostle foretold of them, *but denying the power thereof*. Our Blessed Saviour declar'd of the *Pharisees*, That though they pretended to be better, were yet worse than other men; for though they had the confidence to thank God they *were not extortioners*, yet he who knew them better than they did themselves, tells them that they *devour'd widows houses*, and within were full of *extortion and excess*; their Prayers were all made for Vanity and Ostentation, and their Alms but so many Baits to fish for Honour and the Applause of Men; like whited Sepulchres, they appeared fair and beautiful without, but within were full of rottenness and corruption; and though they Garnished the Sepulchres of the Prophets, as if they hated the Wickedness of those that Killed them, yet they put to Death the Son of God, the great Prophet that was to come, and would have shed the blood of all
that

that followed him : So that all their Care and Zeal for the Memory of the Prophets, was only to hide their Cruelty under a shew of Kindness ; and the garnish'd Tombs were but the painted Monuments of their own Hypocrisy. In a word, as they were solicitous about washing the outside of the Cup and Platter, without mattering how foul and stutish it was within ; so were they more careful to reform their Looks than their Lives ; and under a disguise of greater Sanctity , contrived and acted the vilest Enormities.

And are not the like Policies and Practices too visible in our Modern *Pharisees* ; who under a mask of Zeal and Reformation, have conceal'd and carri'd on very bad Designs ? Have they not a long time put fair Colours upon foul Actions ? And made Religion a stale and pander to the greatest Abominations ? But that Cloak, which hath hitherto done them great service, begins now to be worn out, long use hath made it thredbare, and their Hypocrisy appears through the thinness of the Covering ; Counterfeit Coin seldom keeps its credit long,

long, time wears off the Gilt, and discovers the baseness of the Metal. Such is the inconsistency of Falshood and Hypocrisy, that it often betrays it self; and when the paint and varnish is gone, nothing appears but the deformity; and then the Hypocrite, like the Ass in the Fable stript of the Lion's Skin, stands an object of contempt and scorn. Thus it happened to the *Pharisees* at last; for tho' they charm'd the People a-while, and inveigled many into their Sect by a shew of Holiness, yet the Mask at length fell off, and they became vile and despicable to the whole Nation.

But what is the evil and Mischief of this Device? Great every way. For,

First; This pretence of greater Holiness, is oft-times an Instrument of much deceit, and helps to carry on very evil designs; thus if any have a mind to disturb or overturn the Government, to move Sedition, or alter the Laws and Constitutions, Religion must be pretended; and then a seeming Zeal for the publick Good, and Reformation of Abuses, shall

shall go a great way to compass their ends. If a Man would effectually Cheat his Neighbour, or put the Dice upon him, he pretends to Piety to hide the Juggle, and under a cloak of Religion, acts and covers the foulest Frauds. If he would wreck his Malice, or gratify his Spleen against any Person, he puts on a shew of great Meekness, looks Solemnly, and pretends the greatest Love and Kindness, and thereby secretly wounds and works his own Ends. Thus do Malice, Pride, Covetousness, Revenge, and other vile Enormities, lurk under this disguise, and are carried on under a specious shew and pretence of Religion. Again,

2dly. This Device is a mocking of God, and a high affront offer'd to our Maker; for he that only gilds and paints the outward Man, without any regard to the Heart, shews indeed an Awe and Reverence to Men, who behold and judge only by the outward appearance, but betrays an insolent contempt and slight of God, who looks chiefly to the Heart, and requires Truth in the
inner

inner parts ; he that seeks only to commend himself to the World by fair shews and pretences, without approving himself to God by the sincerity of the Heart, plainly bids defiance to Heaven, and shews a greater fear of Men than God before his Eyes.

Lastly. This great pretence to Religion brings oft-times a scandal upon Religion it self, and tends to destroy and undermine it ; for when these appear to be only Pretences, and that these great shews of Holiness are void of all reality and truth ; it makes the Name of Religion odious, and the Profession of it vile and despicable in the Eyes of the World : This at once debauches and destroys Religion, by drawing out the life of it into mere shew and appearance, and making it evaporate into Air and Formality.

Yea, this naturally leads to Atheism and Infidelity ; for when Men see so many vile Tricks acted under a colour of greater Holiness ; when Faction and Sedition are gilded over with
a sne-

a specious pretence of Zeal, and Men prosecute their Ambition and Avarice under the ensigns of Holiness and Devotion; this makes too many think Religion it self a Trick, and so cast it off as a device of Cunning and Designing Men: And 'tis not to be doubted, but the Atheism and Infidelity of the present Age, is in a great measure owing to the Hypocrisy of such Pretenders.

S I R,

I suppose you plainly see the design and the danger of this Artifice so much us'd by our Dissenters, which is indeed the Master-piece of their Craft, and the principal Engine to draw and deceive the People; they know the Vulgar are easily impos'd upon by fair Shews, and fair Speeches, and how willing they are to embrace a Religion that is so favourable to their Pride, Lust, and Worldly Interest, and puts them to no trouble about the mortifying of either; for 'tis but to polish the outward Man, and make a plausible appearance of Holiness, and they need not
take

(31)

take care about purifying of the Heart, or rectifying any thing that is amiss within; and 'tis no wonder if so easy a Religion finds many Followers. I am,

S I R,

Tours,

A. B.

L E T.

LETTER IV.

S I R,

I Shew'd in my last how serviceable a pretence of greater Holiness is to increase a Party, and create Divisions, together with the vanity and mischief of that Artifice. I proceed in this to a

Third Artifice used by Dissenters to that end; and that is, A pretence to purer Ordinances, and a more Spiritual way of Worship; and herein they are the Successors of the *Cathari*, and the *Donatists* of old, who pretended to a better and purer way of serving God than other Men; and so Separated from them, as Saints of a higher Form, and Men of a more rais'd and elevated Devotion.

And herein they are exactly imitated by our Dissenters, who talk of nothing more than pure Worship, pure Ordinances, and pure Administrations; all which they confine to themselves, and will not allow others any share in them;
yea,

yea, they speak contemptuously of others, as serving God after an old dead and dull way of Forms, whereas They Pray in a more lively manner by their own Gifts, and have a more Pure, Spiritual, and Evangelical way of Worship. They revile the Church of *England* as Popish, and stile its Worship *Antichristian*: Our excellent Liturgy passeth with them for Mass-service, and all its decent Ceremonies for Idolatry and Superstition; the Surplice is a Rag of the Whore of *Babylon*; Bowing at the Name of Jesus, is no better than Bowing to an Idol; and Kneeling at the Holy Sacrament, as bad as falling down to a Graven Image; they interpret the *form of godliness*, mentioned by the Apostle, to be a Form of Prayer; and the Power of Godliness, to be Praying *Extempore*. One of them tells us, "That the reason why the world hates the Saints, is because they are a Praying People: Now lest you should take this Malignity to be directed against Forms, he tells you, no; Forms of Prayer they can bear well enough, but 'tis the Power of Prayer (that is, *Extempore* Prayer) that they can't endure; as if this were a flight of Devotion

above the reach of Worldly and Carnal Minds, and only suited to the more Heavenly and Seraphical Spirit of the Saints.

Now how serviceable this Device is to promote the Party, is easy to conceive; for it mightily gratifies the vanity of Men's Minds to think, that they are not only more Holy than other Men, but that they serve God in a higher and better manner than they; for this makes them believe, with the *Pharisees*, that God rejoices in them, and is mightily pleas'd with them; that they are infinitely dear to him, and that God is highly-delighted both with their Persons and their Prayers. And who that had these thoughts, would not gladly enter into the Class of such Worshipers?

Again; This makes them think well of themselves, and creates no small pleasure and confidence in their ways, though never so False and Erroneous, to think their Prayers are better and more acceptable to God, than other Mens: This makes them infinitely pleased with their Service, and endears to them such a Way of Worship: Yea, it not only tends to invite many into this way,

way, but to make them obstinate and pertinacious in it, to harden them in their Schism, and render it very difficult to reclaim them from it.

But what is that great Purity our Dissenters thus boast of? Is it a greater Purity of Doctrine? No; for herein they acknowledge we agree, and embrace the same Faith. Is it a greater Purity of Life? This is indeed pretended, but experience hath abundantly confuted this pretence, and discovered the Hypocrisy. Is it then a greater Purity of Worship? Yes, this is the great Thing; for Ours (say they) is clogg'd with Ceremonies, and mix'd and blended with the Inventions of Men.

But are not their Prayers the Inventions of Men? Yea, Do they not proceed from the present and sudden Conceptions of their own Brain? Which sure cannot be half so Wise or Pure, as more deliberate and well-weigh'd Compositions: And as for Ceremonies, Are not their various and Antick Gestures in Prayer, which serve but to expose the Worship of God, far more Improper and Impure too, than the decent Ceremonies of the Church, which help to make it more Uniform and Solemn?

Is not haſty Speech delivered in Mimi-
cal Poſtures and Actions, much more
unbecoming Divine Service, than a
Grave and well-order'd Devotion?

But their Worſhip is more Spiritual
than others, for they Pray more by the
Spirit.

How ſo? Do their Prayers come
more from the Heart and Spirit than
other Mens? For that is all the Pray-
ing by the Spirit, ſince the ceaſing of
Inſpiration. And who will preſume to
judge of that? Yea, Is not the Heart
more hinder'd and call'd off in their
Prayers, by the Invention of Matter
and Words, than in others where both
theſe are prepared to their hands? I
hope they do not pretend to Pray by the
immediate dictates and ſuggeſtions of
the Holy Ghoſt, as the Apoſtles did;
if they do, they muſt work a Miracle
that we may believe them, and then we
ſhall reckon all their Prayers of as great
Authority as the Holy Scripture; if
they cannot, they muſt excuſe us, if
we condemn their depending upon ſuch
divine and ſudden Suggeſtions, of great
Raſhneſs and Preſumption; and that
theirs is ſo far from a more Spiritual
way of Worſhip, that 'tis rather more
Carnal,

Carnal, and scarce deserves the name of Divine Worship

And yet here lies the great mystery of this Artifice ; for these Men take Praying *Extempore*, or by present Conceptions, to be Praying by the Spirit, and so call it a Spiritual way of Worship ; whereas Praying by a Form, is stil'd stinting of the Spirit, and so that must not be allow'd to be Spiritual, but Formal Worship ; and by this device, they set the Ears of the People a itching after the one, and turn them away, or make them deaf to the other.

Now this Falacy may be easily apparent to any, that considers that some of the vilest Wretches, and greatest Monsters of Impiety that ever liv'd, have been most famous for this talent of *Extempore* Prayer : We read of one actually in League with the Devil, who had such a Fluency this way, that he was admir'd by all, but could be imitated by none that came near him ; And will any ascribe the Prayers of such a Wretch, made up of Sorceries and the vilest Abominations, to the Spirit of God ? Are they not rather the Diabolical suggestions of the Evil Spirit, and to be ascribed to the true Author the

D 3

Devil,

Vid. *Ravillac* Re-
diverou-,
Major
Were.

Devil, who is the Father of all Lies and Impostures? And certainly he that considers what bad things have been vented in such Prayers, will plainly see it to be not only a Belying, but Blapheming the Holy Ghost, to entitle them to Him.

But 'tis time to shew the evil and danger of this device. And,

First; This pretence of Purer Ordinances and purer Worship, hath prov'd a principle of great Instability and Giddiness in Religion; for when some Men began to refine upon the Established Church, and set up Purer Ordinances, Have not others risen up who thought them not pure enough, and refin'd again upon them; yea, Does not one Sect continue still refining upon another, and God knows when and where it will end? Have not these double and treble Refiners almost refin'd away all their Religion, and left little more than the Name and pretence of it? Is it not dwindled into Air and Speculation, and almost lost in a crowd of endless scruples and disputes? How little of the life and spirit of Religion appears in Mens lives, and how few can shew their Faith by their Works?
Which

Which are the sad effects of this Re-forming and Refining Humour.

Again; This hath made the generality of People despise all Godly Forms, though far more conducing to the purity of Faith and Devotion, than other newfangled Methods; for a Form of sound Words may preserve soundness in the matter of our Prayers, and prevent indecencies in the manner of them; whereas Extemporary Effusions can do neither, for there much unsound Matter, and many unseemly Expressions may and do frequently drop from those that use them.

Moreover, many ignorant and wicked Persons, who have been eminent for this Spiritual way of Praying, have encouraged themselves in their Wickedness upon the account of this Gift, and too many still flatter themselves on the same account, that they are the Children of God, and endow'd with his Spirit; notwithstanding all their Wickedness.

Others again, for lack of this Gift, have been apt to despond, as if they wanted that which should chiefly recommend them unto God: And both of them have thereby grievously

vouſly deceived both themſelves and others.

Befides, This pretence of greater Purity naturally leads to Schiſm and Separation; for he that offers a Purer Model, ſhall be ſure to draw Diſciples after him; and many Men being too much given to change, are apt to hearken to any higher offers and degrees of Purity; there are ſome who dream of Purity and Perfection here in this life, and theſe will eaſily liſten to any tenders and advances towards it: This will cauſe them to divide and ſeparate from others, vainly thinking themſelves advanc'd to a higher Form in Chriſt's School, and to have attain'd to greater meaſures of Perfection; which naturally leads not only to Separating, but Vilifying one another; for they that take themſelves to be of a higher Claſs, will ſcorn to join or con-verſe with thoſe of a lower Form; and as others ſwell in their thoughts and conceits above them, ſo will they make them too the object of their contempt and ſcorn; hence we find the Presbyterians, who had declaim'd againſt the Church for making an Idol of the Common-Prayer, were by the Independents,

dents, and other Sectaries told, That they made a greater and worse Idol of their Covenant; and they who had stil'd the Liturgy and Episcopacy the Calves of *Dan* and *Bethel*, found after, the Directory and Presbytery branded with the same names, and they too accounted the greatest Calves that most admired them.

Thus you see to what pass declaiming against publick Order, and pretending to purer Ordinances, may bring matters to, which cannot but give great disturbance to any Church or Kingdom; whereas the Wisdom that is from above, is not only *pure*, but *peaceable*, *gentle*, *easy to be intreated*, *free from pride*, *full of good works*, *without partiality*, and *without hypocrisy*, James 3. 17, 18. If you will bring the pretences of Dissenters to this Test, 'tis to be feared *Mene Tekel* may be written on them, *they are weigh'd in the balance*, and found wanting in all these things. I am,

Tours,

A. B.

L E T.

LETTER V.

S I R,

I Find you sensible in your last, of the great mischief of some Mens pretences to greater Purity, and a more Spiritual way of Worship, and what great advantage they have given to Sectaries to multiply and increase their Parties. I shall proceed therefore to a

Fourth Artifice made use of to that purpose, and that is to cry up Peace and Unity, though their Actions tend all the while to destroy and undermine them. They know the Holy Scriptures abound every where with Precepts and Exhortations to Peace and Unity, and what pressing Arguments and motives are made use of to that end.

The ~~First~~ things proclaim'd to the World, upon our Blessed Saviour's coming into it, next to the *glory of God*, were *peace on earth*, and *good will towards men* : The whole course of his Life and Doctrine, whilst he continued in it, was to promote and give the highest Instance

stance and Example of them. The last Legacy he bequeathed to his Disciples and Followers at his leaving the World, was *Peace*, which he will'd them above all things to keep firm and inviolable ; and his last Prayer was, *they all might be one*. Accordingly we find the first Christians, upon Christ's departure from them, were all of *one heart and one mind*. And when upon the spreading of the Gospel every where, this bond of Peace and Unity began to be broken by the insinuations of False Teachers, we find the *Apostles* using all diligence to arm and caution all their Converts against them, willing them to endeavour to keep the *unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, to stand firm to the Truth of the Gospel, and to be perfectly join'd together in the same Mind, and the same Judgment. St. Paul strictly warned the *Corinthians* against falling into Parties, and following of Factions, to the prejudice of Peace and Unity ; he heap'd up many Arguments in his Epistle to the *Ephesians*, to keep that bond inviolate ; and because many false Teachers had crept in among the *Philippians*, he beseeched them by all the endearments of Christianity, to be *like-minded*, being of one accord and one mind.

Now

Now the Dissenters knowing how much Peace and Unity are recommended and inculcated in Holy Scripture, find it necessary to speak up for it ; hence you shall often hear them commending Peace, and seemingly very desirous to have Love and Unity preserved and promoted among Christians ; they frequently lament the lack of Love in the World , and bewail the want of those due Tempers and peaceable Dispositions that should unite us.

This gains them the reputation of Meek, Quiet, and Peaceable Men, and That gains them Profelytes, who are made to believe, That to be followers of them , is to be followers of Peace. They, Good Men ! (say some of their deluded Disciples) are all for Peace, they are sorry to find so much Hatred among Men ; they Preach up nothing more than Peace and Love, and are always Praying for the *Peace of Jerusalem*.

But what truth is there in all these fair speeches and pretences ? Why, little or none ; For *what peace*, said *Jehu*, *while the whoredoms of Jezebel, and her witchcrafts are so many ? Quid verba audiam , facta dum Videam ?* What heed is to be given to words, when deeds confute

fute them? Their gathering Disciples, and making Parties, are plain breaches of that Peace which they seem to cry up; and their Schism and Separation a manifest breach of Unity; What Peace had *Zimri* who slew his Master? Do not some speak much of Peace when they are making ready for Battel? Do not many seem quiet and harmless Creatures, whilst 'tis not in their power to be otherwise, who yet are all the while hoping and waiting for advantages, and want nothing but opportunity to break out into open Hostilities? These are not the Sons, but Enemies of Peace, who seek to supplant what they would be thought to maintain; and 'tis but a false trick to cry Peace, Peace, when their aims are Dominion, or Destruction.

But what is the Peace they thus speak up for? And what is the design or meaning of it?

Why, 'tis an indulgence in their Schism, to be let alone to draw Disciples after them, and increase their Party; to be allowed to fill their Conventicles, and deceive the People without Molestation; this, like good peaceable Men, they will be content with at present, till
they

they can become strong enough to get more.

So that this is a false Peace, and is indeed no better than a fatal security, whereby they endeavour to lull their Followers asleep in their Schism; and to blind the Eyes of the World, that they may not discern the evil and danger of their ways.

But there is another branch of this Artifice that must not be omitted; and that is, their declaiming against differences and divisions, when the whole course of their Actions tend all the while to promote them. This piece of falshood you may easily discover by an ordinary observation; they know well enough that Love and Unity are necessarily destroyed by divisions; they are aware likewise what advantage they give to the common Enemy, what trouble they are to all Good Men, and what scandal they bring upon Religion it self; and therefore they must not be thought to have any heart or hand in causing Divisions, no, they are too sensible of the evil, to be found the Promoters of them; they bewail the Distempers and Disorders of the Times: " 'Tis a sad thing (says one) that Unity, which
" is

“ is so good and pleasant a thing in the
 “ Eyes of God and Man, should be so
 “ little regarded. 'Tis much to be la-
 “ mented (saith another) that there
 “ should be such discord and Divisions
 “ found among Christians.

Whence then should these Divisions come? And who are the Authors of them? Not They to be sure, for they, good men, are all for love and unity, though their Actions proclaim the quite contrary, and betray the falshood of their Pretences; they are only for healing our Breaches, though they are all the while making of Parties to widen and increase them; they are for uniting of Protestants, and at the same time draw as many into Schism and Separation as they can.

But what have they to evade this guilt that lies so plainly at their doors? Why, 'tis the Liturgy and the Ceremonies must bear the blame, though no Christian Church was ever without the one, and no Divine Worship can be decently or orderly perform'd without the other.
 “ 'Tis a sad thing (saith a gifted Bro-
 “ ther) that such Bones of Contention
 “ should be thrown in the way of Chri-
 “ stians; surely if they that compos'd
 the

“the Common-Prayer had dreamt that
 “it would create so many Divisions, Tu-
 “mults and Distractions, they would
 “never have found either heart or hand
 “to lift up to the promoting of it. Alas
 poor Man! he might have said as well,
 that the Penmen of the Holy Scriptures
 would never have wrote as they did, if
 they had dreamt what bad use Hereticks
 and Schismatics would make of it,
 and what perverse Disputes and Divi-
 sions would be rais’d about it: ’Twas
 not the Composing, no nor yet the en-
 joining the Common Prayer, which is
 a pious and excellent model of Devo-
 tion, but some mens raising a dust be-
 fore the eyes of the People, that they
 may not see the usefulness and excellen-
 cy of it, that have created all these di-
 stractions and disputes about it.

But when these Men are pressed with
 their causing divisions, beyond a pos-
 sibility of a fair Reply, they tell us,
 that there must be Heresies and Divisi-
 ons, that they *who are approved may be*
made manifest, 1 Cor. 10.

But must not the Authors and Abet-
 tors of divisions be made manifest too?
 Does not the same Apostle bid us to
mark them that cause divisions, and avoid
them?

them? Signifying, that Hereticks and Schismatics should have a Brand or Mark set upon them, that they may be known and shunn'd by all Christians, as the Bane and Pest of any Church and Kingdom.

And now I think this Artifice is pretty well detected, and a vulgar Eye may plainly see the evil and danger of it; for if heaping up different Teachers be not a breach of Unity, and drawing Men from an Established Church be not causing Divisions, I know not what is: Does not the Apostle blame the divided dialect of the *Corinthians*, when one said, *I am of Paul*, another *I am of Apollo*, and another *I am of Cephas*, &c. though they proceeded not so far as to break Communion? And if the bare crying up different Teachers in the same Church, be there branded for Schism, How much wider must the breach be, when they withdraw from the Communion of it, and set up separate Meetings, and different ways of Worship in opposition to it?

This is plainly the case of our Dissenters; and if *St. Paul* rebuk'd those lesser Schisms and Divisions, of preferring some Teachers before others with-

E.

in

in the Church, as signs of Carnality, and degrees of Apostacy; how much greater must the fault be, to make a Schism from the Church, by dividing from the Worship and Communion of it?

Neither is the danger hereof less apparent than the Sin; for this hath a pernicious influence, not only on the persons thus seduced from it, who are thereby rent and torn from the Body of Christ, and harden'd in a dangerous and deadly Schism; but on the whole Church, whose Peace and Unity is thereby broken, and being depriv'd of many of its Members, is thereby weaken'd and laid open to the Assaults of its greatest Enemies.

These and many more are the sad effects of this Device, and must be charg'd on those Craftsmen who talk much of Peace and Unity, the better to supplant both; and declaim against Divisions, merely to promote and propagate them. I am,

S I R,

Yours,

A. B.
L E T.

LETTER VI.

S I R,

I Shew'd in my last the Craft of Dissenters in crying up Unity, and decrying Divisions; and how by that means they cunningly destroy the one, and promote the other. I proceed now to a

Fifth Artifice of theirs to support their Schism, and that is, Their Censuring the Lives and Actions of those within the Church, the better to commend theirs who Dissent from it.

And herein, again, they are the followers of the *Pharisees*, a great part of whose Religion consisted in Censuring the Lives, and Scorning the Persons of other Men. Our Saviour hath observed of them, *Matt. 7. 3.* that they were sharp and quick in espying a *mote in their brother's eye*, when they could not discern a *beam in their own*. They beheld the faults of others in a magnifying Glass, which made them aggravate all their failings, when all the while

they could see nothing amiss in themselves, and easily overlook'd their own Enormities.

A Learned Author hath observ'd of them, That they had an Eye upon every Man's Life except their own, and mightily concern'd themselves in others Behaviour; they had a reproof for every Man's faults, great or small, but were still very favourable and indulgent to themselves.

And herein they are exactly imitated, if not outdone by our Dissenters, who delight in nothing more than censuring the Lives, and condemning the Actions of other Men; Is there any thing more obvious than this in all their Discourse and Conversation? With what pleasure do they insist upon and aggravate other Mens failings? Hurting their Neighbours Credit, sometimes by open Calumnies, which is the Arrow that flies by day; and sometimes by secret Whispers, which is the Pestilence that walketh in darkness, and wounds without being seen: How freely shall you hear them taxing the Actions, and talking of the Miscarriages of other Folk? How eloquent are they wont to be upon this Subject? With what heat and concern!

cern! With what seeming zeal and warmth does this reviling Language drop from them! Yea, Do they not place a great part of their Religion in censuring the Wickedness of the times, crying out upon the Badness of Mens Lives, and shaking their Empty Heads at the Naughtiness of their Ways?

Now you must not think that these bolts are shot at Them, or that any of the Party are to be reckoned in the number of these Wicked ones; no, they are those Righteous Souls in *Sodom*, who are vexed with the filthy Conversation of the Wicked, and for whose sake the rest are spared. 'Tis the Churchmen, and they that follow the Common-Prayer, that are guilty of all these Enormities: We find one of them telling us in Print, " That they who
 " like this kind of Worship, are generally Ignorant, Prophane, Superstitious, Time-servers, Fearful, Unbelievers, Haters of those that are Good, Drunkards, Adulterers, &c. Well said, thou Accuser of the Brethren! throw Dirt enough, and to be sure some will stick. In another place he adds, " That they are generally Persons much
 " estranged from the Life of God, and
 E 3 " little

“ little acquainted with the Power of
 “ Godliness. Alas, Good Man! he is
 griev’d at the heart to see the deadness
 and formality of such Worshippers. A-
 nother of these Godly Brethren tells us,
 “ That the Bishops are an Earthly
 “ Generation, and favour not the
 “ things of God; and that there is
 “ more of God and Religion in some
 “ one Congregation of a Silenc’d Mi-
 “ nister, than in all the Bishops Fa-
 “ milies in *England*. Are not these
 Charitable and Clean-mouth’d Souls?
 Or rather, are not their Tongues set
 on Fire of Hell?

But what is the Design of all these
 rude Censures and Calumnies? Why,
 to draw the People from the Established
 Church, and to persuade them to come
 out from such an unsanctified Crew;
 and withal to invite them to the Con-
 venticle, where they will find better
 Company, and join with the Assembly
 of the Saints.

How serviceable this Stratagem hath
 been to increase and keep up the Party,
 is obvious to observe. For

This gratifies the natural Pride and
 Ambition of Mens Hearts, who are
 willing to be thought better than
 other

other Men; and are easily persuaded to hearken to, and believe those that tell them so. Again,

This gratifies the Spleen and Animosity that some have against their Neighbours, thus to vent their malice in Censures and evil Reflections on their Life and Manners; a Religion that allows and commends these things, must be very grateful to Flesh and Blood, and cannot want many Followers. Moreover,

This cherishes in Men a mighty love and conceit of themselves, making them think, that they hate and abhor those sins themselves, which they thus Censure and Condemn in others.

Besides, all Men desire an easy Religion, and would willingly go to Heaven the nearest and softest way that may be; now what can be more easy than to Saint themselves by defaming others? And who would not embrace a Religion that will indulge Men in their Vices, if they do but declaim against them, and censure them in other People? Yea, 'tis a pleasing and delightful thing to some Persons to find faults in other Men, for it

gives a seeming satisfaction in their own innocence, or at least gives them the reputation of their own freedom from them.

In short, this declaiming against Vice, and lamenting the Iniquity of the times, gains them the reputation of being thought more Pious than other men, and serves all those secular ends they propound in it: Our *Saviour* tells us of the *Pharisees*, *that they had their reward*; that is, they gain'd the Applause of the world, and the Wealth of others; which were the things they aim'd at in their seeming Zeal; and this is such a plausible and profitable piece of Religion, that it will be sure to have many Disciples.

But is it any part of true Religion to censure the Lives and Actions of others? Or have they that use to do so, fewer faults and more Religion than their Neighbours? No, in no wise. For

First; This is so far from being any part of Religion, that 'tis none at all; yea, 'tis quite contrary to, and destructive of it; for Charity is the life of Christianity, and the bond
of

of perfectness, without which, he that liveth is counted dead before God. Now Charity, you know, *covereth a multitude of sins*; and is so far from Censuring, that it Excuses, what it may, the failings of others, and rather hides than discloses another's nakedness: He that wants this, may indeed have the shew and appearance, but hath nothing of the substance and reality of true Religion; for that makes us to keep at home and reform our own Lives, not send us abroad to pry into and condemn the Lives of others; and certainly, if we can lay no claim to Charity, we have nothing to shew for the truth and sincerity of our Christianity.

Again 2^{dly}. They that are so forward to Judge and Censure others, are commonly so far from being better, that they are worse than other Men; their want of Charity ranks them among the greatest of Sinners; we find the *Pharisees*, who were Proud, Boasters of themselves, and likewise rigid Censurers of others, were by our Saviour condemn'd

demn'd for the vilest Hypocrites ;
they laid heavy burdens on others ,
which they themselves would not touch
with the least of their fingers ; And
'tis still the practice of their Followers , to Commend themselves by Disparaging of others ; and to raise the Trophies of their own Honour , upon the Spoils and Ruins of their Neighbours.

Yea , this practice is frequently made a Cloak , not only to cover , but to act under it the greatest Villanies : He that designs to undermine , or put a Cheat upon his Neighbour , shall inveigh bitterly against the Iniquity of the times ; and complain much of the Lives and Manners of other Men ; and by that means seeks to gain the Credit of a Saint , that he may the better act the part of an Impostor. They that have a mind to advance themselves , or to intrude into places of Power and Profit , shall inveigh against the Persons , and find fault with the Actions of those that are employed in them , and by this Art shall oft-times Prefer themselves to
the

the Hindering or Dispossessing of better Men.

Now this will lead us to consider the evil and danger of this Artifice: for beside the many and great Injuries that are hereby done to Mankind; 'tis usurping the Throne of God, and intruding into his Tribunal; *Who made thee a Judge?* May be ask'd of all such insolent Censurers of other Men, who intrude into this Office without any Commission. *Judge nothing before the time*, saith the Apostle; so that these Men forestal the Day of Judgment, and take God's work out of his Hands, who thus presume to sit in Judgment upon their Brethren, and pronounce Sentence in things that belong not to them; *Who art thou* (saith the same Apostle) *that judgest another man's servant; to his own master he stands or falleth?* So that this is a high affront and indignity offered to God thus to Arraign the Actions of our Fellow-Creatures; and without any Authority to Condemn and pass Sentence upon his Servants.

And

And as the guilt hereof is great, so is the danger of it no less; for the Justice of God cannot suffer such an insolent invasion of his Authority to go unpunished; *Thinkest thou, O man, that judgest another, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? No; they shall have judgment without mercy, who shew no mercy, and their damnation is just, who are so ready upon all occasions to Condemn their Brethren. Our Blessed Saviour's Advice is, Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgement ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, shall be measured to you again: Let him that is innocent cast the first stone; and if we cannot justify our selves, we should not be so forward to condemn others: Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thy self.*

I shall conclude this Artifice, with that Advice given to the Pharisees; *Thou Hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thy own eye, and then*

(61)

*then shalt thou see clearly to cast out
the mote out of thy Brothers eye.
I am,*

S I R,

Tours,

A. B.

L E T.

LETTER VII.

S I R,

Finding that you have well considered the Last ; I proceed now to a

Sixth Artifice of our Dissenters, and that is, to stile the Lawful and Wise Injunctions of our Superiors, by the odious name of Impositions ; a term importing more of fraud and double-dealing, than truth and justice in them. This comes (saith one) to justify the Impositions ; as if it were a crime to vindicate publick Orders and Constitutions ; and to speak up for them, were to be an abetter of Fraud, and an encourager of Imposture : If we tell them of the unreasonableness of Separation, they fly upon us with the mischief of Impositions ; and rather than own themselves Schismatics, will make their Governors Impostors.

But what is the design of putting this ill name upon good Laws ? Why, the plain design is to keep the People
from

from complying with them, and to hinder all Conformity and Obedience to them: Should they suffer them to pass under the ancient stile of Laws, Ordinances, or Injunctions, they might put in a just claim to an Observance of them, and the People be thereby tempted to yield due Reverence and Obedience to them; and therefore to prevent this, which would be the Ruin of their Cause, they must give them a bad name, which they know is the ready way to make them despis'd. Nonconformity being a breach of wholesome Orders and Establishments, is wholly supported by Disobedience to them; and therefore they must not be called Laws or Statutes, lest the guilt of breaking them should awaken their Consciences, and stare too much in their Face; but they must be branded with the black Character of Impositions, that they may with the better colour and greater safety shake off the Observance of them. This will serve to keep the People from the Church, where they are made to believe, that they are only impos'd upon; and keep them to the Conventicle, where they are told they are more fairly and truly dealt with. And how
 useful

useful this is to preserve and propagate the Schism, is very easy to imagine.

Again; By this device the Dissenters can shift off all the blame of the Divisions from themselves, and lay them at others doors; which is indeed a great piece of Art, and stands them in good stead; for if they are charged with the danger and evil consequents of our unchristian Divisions and Separations, they presently throw off all the guilt of them from themselves, and lay it upon the Impositions; they, good men! are in no fault, but they who have made the yoke of Conformity intolerable, by laying too much upon the backs of their weak Brethren, and making the Burthen too heavy for their tender Consciences to bear; by this Artifice they seek cunningly to discharge themselves of all the troubles and commotions in these Kingdoms, which they put not upon their own stubbornness and disobedience to good Laws, which is the true cause of them; but upon their Governors for Imposing upon them, and making the yoke of Government too heavy and hard to be born.

But

But what are those Laws which they fix this odious brand upon, and call by the nick-name of Impositions?

Why, they are the good Orders and Constitutions of the Church, appointed only for the external Reverence and Decency of Divine Worship; 'tis the Liturgy and Discipline of the Church that must go under this infamous Character, to keep their Followers from all due Submission and Obedience to them. And as the first Enemies of Christianity arrayed the ancient Christians in Bear-Skins and Goat-Skins, that they might be the more worried and baited by the Multitude; so have the Architects of Schism put this vile Title on wholesome Orders, to make them the more hated and abhorred by the People.

Hence we read, That when King *Charles* the First, out of a Pious Zeal for the Unity and Uniformity of all the Churches in his Dominions, Ordered a Liturgy to be Composed and Used in the Church of *Scotland*, which was no more than hath been practised in all Christian Churches, and well enough became a Christian Prince

F

to

to do ; What loud out-cries against Impositions were raised by some Turbulent and Factious Spirits in that Kingdom ? Who thereupon brake out in an unnatural War and Rebellion against their Lawfull Sovereign ; yea, and had the Impudence too to charge all that Blood upon that Pious Prince, which was wickedly shed by those Impious Traytors. By which we plainly see the mischief of this Device.

And though abundantly enough hath been written by our own and Foreign Divines, to take off this false Imputation, yet the cry must still go on, to continue and propagate the Schism.

But what is it that makes the Burthen of Impositions (as they call them) so heavy ? Why

First ; 'Tis the giving of Assent and Consent to all that is contain'd in, and prescrib'd by the Book of Common-Prayer. This they are continually buzzing in the Ears of the People, though they are no way concern'd in it, and so fright them from the Communion of the Church by their feigned and imaginary Scare-Crows ; for this is no where required of them, and consequently there can be no reason of frightening them
with

with this Bugbear, but only to keep them from the publick Worship. The Minister indeed, who is to offer up the publick Prayers of the Church, is required to give his Assent to them : And can any thing be more reasonable, than that he that is called to this Office, should be satisfied in the Soundness of the publick Devotion ; Is it fit that any should Officiate this way, who doubts of the Truth or Usefulness of the publick Service ? Must not this occasion great Coldness and Hypocrisie in the Worship of God ? If they think the serving of God by the Common-Prayer, be a Service pleasing unto him, Why can they not Assent and Consent to it ? If they do not, How can they be fit to Officiate, or indeed at any time to join in the Use of it ? So that this, if well considered, will be found rather a needless Cavil, than a just Exception against the prescribed Worship. But

2dly. The Imposing *This, and no Other*, adds to the weight of the Impositions, and makes the Burthen too heavy.

How so ? Is not a standing Liturgy, containing all the Offices of Religion, sufficient to all the ends of Piety and Devotion ? Are not Peace, Unity, and

Order, best preserved by one Uniform Established way of Worship? Are Men imposed upon, unless they are left free to what way of Worship they please, which necessarily breeds Confusion and every Evil work? Of this our own sad Experience may abundantly satisfy us, and withall plainly shew the fallacy of this Artifice.

Now the mischief of this Device is too visible both in Church and State; for the crying out upon Impositions, and branding good Laws with that odious Name, hath kept many from all Obedience to them. In short, this hath bred a contempt of Authority, and involv'd whole Kingdoms in Blood and Confusion.

But there is another branch of this Artifice, and that is, The stiling the just Penalties of wholsom Laws, by the hateful Name of Persecution: This is a plain consequent of the former; for when Men think themselves imposed upon by publick Orders and Constitutions, they will soon think themselves Persecuted when they are Punished for the breach of them; hence we find the Dissenters often setting up the cry of Persecution, by which they would have
their

their Governors to be thought Tyrants, and themselves the Saints that suffer under them ; yea, they compare their Condition to that of the Primitive Christians, and would make the World believe, that when they are punished for the breach of Unity, Peace, and Order, they are as much persecuted, as those first Christians in all their Sufferings for the Truth of Christianity.

But this Artifice being already fully detected, I shall add no more here, but refer you to it. I am,

S I R,

Yours,

A. B.

LETTER VIII.

SIR,

YOU see the Mischief of calling things by wrong Names, as stiling publick Laws by the Name of Impositions, and the Penalties annex'd to the Breach of them, by the Name of Persecution ; which hath made many too careless of the one, and fearless of the other. I come now to

A *Seventh* Artifice of Dissenters, and that is, to keep the People in Ignorance of the Nature and Danger of Schism, or else to feed them with wrong Notions and Conceits of it.

Indeed the *Romish* Priests are not more studious to conceal the Corruptions of their Church, than these Men are to disguise the Errors of the Conventicle.

This is evident in the Matter of Schism ; for though it be one of the greatest Sins that can be committed, being a tearing in pieces the Body of Christ ; and as far exceeds any other Vice,

Vice, as rending one Limb from another is worse than a Corrupt Humour ; yet the People must not know so much, the guilt of it must be hid from their Eyes ; yea, it must be look'd on rather as a Duty, than a Crime ; and Separation from the Communion of the Establish'd Church, must be a withdrawing from the Synagogue of Satan. If any Church-man shall presume to set forth the heinousness of this Sin, or make so bold as to charge Dissenters with it, they are taught to call it Railing ; and instead of reforming the Evil in their own Persons, must agree together to run down the Preacher ; this is too well known in experience to need any proof ; for none ever reproved this Sin in them, but they said he Railed ; and though it be Zeal and Duty in them to inveigh against the Faults of others, yet 'tis Malignity of Spirit, and Hatred of the Power of Godliness, to lay open their Miscarriages.

But are these Men all this while free from the guilt of this Sin, which they are so unwilling to hear of?

No, notoriously guilty of it ; for a causeless Separation from a true Church, is by the Confession of their own Teach-

ers, acknowledged to be the Sin of Schism, as they often declared in their Arguings against the *Brownists* of old, and the Sectaries of later Days. Now the Wifest of them generally own the Church of *England* to be a True Church, and none of them with all their skill have ever shew'd any just cause for Separation from it; and therefore breaking from the Worship and Communion of it, cannot possibly be excused from Schism.

How then comes it to pass, that their Teachers conceal this from them, and not only suffer this guilt to lie upon them, but lead and encourage them too in that evil, which themselves condemn in others?

Why, the plain Reason is to preserve and uphold the Party; for should the People once know the nature and danger of Schism, and be sensible how guilty they are of it, the Dissenting Cause will fall to the ground, and the whole business of the Conventicle be soon at an end; and therefore to prevent that, the People must be kept in ignorance of their Duty, lest they should return to it; and not be permitted to know the evil of Separation; lest they

they should turn from it. So that Ignorance too is the Mother of these Mens Devotion; and they who speak so much of their great Light, are merely led on and kept in Darknes.

But by what Arts do these Men thus hoodwink and blind the Eyes of the People? Why,

To hinder them from the knowledge of Schism, they keep them as much as possible from hearing any Discourses of it; they permit them not to Read those Books that would discover to them the Evil of it: If they hear of any Book written to that purpose, or find it put into the hands of any of their Followers, they caution them against it as a dangerous Piece, and tending to subvert the Power of Godliness. Thus do they keep their Followers in Ignorance by the same methods the *Romish* Priests do theirs.

If any of their Teachers publish any thing, though never so mean, to hide the Schism, and harden their Followers in it, they send it about in Triumph, Posting in up like Quack Bills in Market-places, and other places of resort; thereby spreading it among the deluded

Vul-

Vulgar, who are apt to magnifie the Performance, to lessen the Sin.

But if, notwithstanding their endeavours, the Eyes of any begin to open, and they come to see the Error of their ways, great care is taken to put out that Light, and to stifle such Convictions: If by any means they smell out the danger of Schism, they make them believe it to be only a Theological Scare-Crow, whereby Men in Power would enforce their own Dictates. But is breaking the Peace and Unity of the Church a mere Scare-Crow? Is the dividing of Christ himself, and rending in sunder the Communion of Saints, which is the nature of Schism, only a Bugbear to fright Fools and Children? Certainly they can be no living Members of Christ's Body, who are so insensible of these Convulsions.

But they tell them farther, That the Papists charge us with the same guilt, and brand us as much for Schismaticks as we do them. But

Is there the same reason? Have not the Terms of their Communion been plainly proved to be Sinful, and such as we cannot safely join in? And hath this been ever proved of ours? Nay, Do
not

not themselves own the contrary by their Occasional Communion with us? And, I hope, there is some Difference between a voluntary departing from the Church, and being driven from it.

But to keep them in their Schism, they add, That the Terms of Communion should be only Scriptural and Unexceptionable; whereas Ours are Doubtful, and such against which many have great Scruples and Exceptions.

But is there any thing, how wisely soever order'd, against which weak and wilful Persons may not entertain some Scruples? May not cunning and designing Men raise a mist before the Eyes of the People, and keep them from discerning the clearest Truths? And must such artificial Doubts juggle out a plain and necessary Duty? I hope the Wisdom of Superiors may direct and overrule in case of Doubts, and their Authority may carry weight enough to weigh down such Scruples.

When they are beaten out of these Subterfuges, they tell the People, That
Schism

Schism is a falling off from the Communion of the *Catholick Church*, not of This, or That particular Church ; so that they may continue Members of Christ's Church in general, though they divide from the National or Parish-Church where they live.

But is there any Communicating with the *Catholick Church*, without being in Communion with some particular Church ? Can a Member belong to the Body, that is not joined to any part of it ? No more can any be a Member of Christ's Body, that is divided from that part of it where he lives : So that if the *Church of England* be a sound Part of the *Catholick Church*, as is generally owned by all sober Dissenters, we cannot divide from it, without dividing from the Whole, and separating from the *Catholick Church* of Christ.

But farther, to palliate and propagate their Schism, they tell them, That 'tis no unjust Separation, till it proceed so far as to deny the Faith ; and whilst they keep the Christian Faith, they cannot justly be charged with Schism.

But

But is there no difference beteween Apostacy and Schism? Is it not one thing to deny the Faith, and another to forsake the Communion of the Church? May not some be pretty sound, and tenacious too, of the Christian Faith, and so be neither Hereticks nor Apostates, who yet may Separate from the Worship and Communion of the Church, and so be justly branded for Schismatics? Do not all the ancient Fathers in their Disputes with the Hereticks, carefully distinguish between these Two? May we not see some breaking the Unity and Communion of the Church, who yet do not renounce there Creed, or deny the Articles of the Christian Faith? The confounding these Two, hath not only confounded their Notions, but brought great Confusion into the Church.

And yet at other times they would persuade them, That Schism is only a breach of Love and Charity within the Church, and signifies no more than Divisions and Contentions among the Members of the same Church, in crying up different Teachers, as it happened in the Church of *Corinth*,
when

when *one* said, *I am of Paul*, another, *I am of Apollo*, &c. and this, say they, begot those Sidings and Factions, which the Apostle there calls and reproves by the Name of Schisms.

Well ; But if those lesser Differences and Sidings among the Members of the same Church, be by the Apostle stiled Schisms, and condemn'd as occasions of great Heats and Animosities, How much more must those greater Variances of breaking Communion, and setting up Separate Meetings and Ways of Worship against each other be condemn'd for such ? And how naturally these things tend to destroy Love and Charity, is too plain, by those flames of Contention which these sparks have already kindled.

But there is one thing more by which they mislead unwary People in this matter, that must not be passed by, and that is, their making them believe, That an Act of Parliament by granting a Toleration hath taken off the Schism, and removed the guilt of it ; for we find the Ring-Leader of the Party venting this wild
Noti-

Notion, *viz.* "If the Supreme Au-^{Baxter's}
 "thority loosen our Obligation to the
 "Parish Meeting, the Iniquity upon^{p. 32.}
 "this account is not to be found,
 "and the Schism is gone; lo here!
 "saith he, a way opened for the
 "Parliament (if they please) to rid
 "both the trouble and scruple of
 "Schism out of the Land.

But can they rid the Sin and Guilt
 of it too out of the Land? If not,
 'tis fit the Scruple and Trouble of it
 too should remain to keep Men from
 it; the Peace and Unity of the Church
 is given in strict Charge by Christ
 and his Apostles to all the Members
 of it; And is any Earthly Power
 able to loosen this Obligation? Can
 Human Laws vacate the Authority
 and Obligation of Divine Laws? If
 so, we might invert the Apostle's
 Question, and say, 'tis fitter to Obey
 men than God. The Parliament in-
 deed may take off the Temporal Pe-
 nalties, which themselves have annex'd
 to the Sin of Schism; but the Guilt
 and Obligation to Eternal Punishment,
 can be taken off by none but God
 only, who hath laid it upon it.

And

And yet there is one way by which the Parliament may rid this evil out of the Land, and that is, by Removing Schismatical Teachers, and Suppressing Seditious Conventicles: And that way the Iniquity of it may not be found; and the Schism may be gone. I am,

Yours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER IX.

S I R,

I Shewed in my last, the Dissenters artificial concealing the nature and guilt of Schism, and their feeding the People with false Notions of it, to continue and increase their Party. I proceed now to

Another Artifice to this end, and that is, their mistaking or misinterpreting fundry Passages of Holy Scripture, whereby they wrest it from the true sense, and draw it in to serve their own purpose.

And herein again they are the Followers of the *Pharisees*, who by their false Glosses, and perverse Interpretations, made void the Law of God. Of this many Instances may be given; and that you may be the better satisfied of this Device, I shall single out a few.

And the first I shall mention of these, shall be that of *Deut. 4. 2.* *Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought*
G
from

from it; that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you.

From this Scripture they infer, That the Church of *England* hath made several Additions to the Word of God, and so turn the fault of the Schism upon her, by clogging its Communion with such uncommanded Conditions. Now the plain sense of those Words is this, “Ye shall not Transgress the “Commandments of God, by doing “any thing contrary to them, which “is to add to them; or by omitting any “thing required by them, which is to “diminish from them. Now let the Wisest of them shew any one thing Appointed by the Church, that is forbidden by the Word of God, or omitting any thing required by it, and then we shall own the Charge; but if they cannot do this, which had been done long since, if it could have been done at all, they must excuse us if we take them not only for false Expositors of the Holy Scriptures, but false Accusers of the Holy Church.

The Additions there forbidden, are to the Substance of God's Word, by making other and more Precepts and
Pro-

Prohibitions than that hath made, and adding new substantial Parts of Divine Worship; but cannot with any congruity of sense be extended to the Circumstantials of it, as Time, Place, Habit, Gesture, and the like; which though not particularly determined in Holy Scripture, are yet necessarily implied in the general Rules of Order, Decency, and Edification required in it.

And yet these Men will never leave asking that Question, *Who hath required these things at your hands?* Though the nature of the Thing, the general Rules of God's Word, and the Power set up by Christ in his Church, to which we owe Obedience, have expressly required these things from us. Isa. 1. 13.

Yea, these rare Expositors have unwittingly fallen into that very Evil themselves, which they condemn in others, by making more things Unlawfull, than God's Word hath made so; and Forbidding many things which are no where Forbidden by it; which is a plain Addition to the Substance of Religion.

But those words of *Jeremy* (say *Jer. 7. 31.* these Men), *They built the high places of Tophet, to burn their sons and their daughters* 19. 5.

ters in the fire, which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart ; lay the stress of the Provocation, not upon doing what God had Forbidden, but in doing what he had not Commanded them.

But how often must these Men be told, and by some of their own Party too, that the meaning of those words, *which I commanded them not*, is the same with what *I had forbidden them* ; for so the thing there referred to expressly was, *viz. their offering their children unto Moloch* : Yea, that Phrase, *which I commanded them not*, is in the Old Testament generally applied to what God had Forbidden : *They offered strange fire which the Lord commanded not*, Levit. 10. 1. that is, which he had forbidden them : *They worshipped other Gods which I have not commanded*, i. e. which I have forbidden.

So that to make it necessary to have an express Command for every Circumstance of Divine Worship, and to charge the doing any thing in it without such a Command, for an Addition to God's Word, is it self a plain Addition to it, where no such thing is either mentioned or required : Yea, the mistake

stake hereof hath been so frequently and so fully laid open, that they must be past all shame, that have the face to mention it any more.

Another Text perverted by these Artists, is that of *Joshua* 7. 13. where *Joshua* is commanded to Sanctifie the People, because there was an Accursed thing among them, which must be taken away, before *Israel* could have Peace, or stand before their Enemies.

Now this Accursed thing was a goodly Babylonish garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold of fifty shekels; which *Achan* had stole, and hid in the earth in the midst of his tent, ver. 21. which being done contrary to the Covenant and Command of God, he troubled *Israel*, who could find no rest, till *Joshua*, by God's Command, destroy'd this Accursed thing, and Burnt *Achan* who had purloined it.

But what use do these Expositors make of this Scripture? Why, a goodly one indeed; the *accursed thing*, must be the Common-Prayer; the *Babylonish garment*, the Surplice; the *wedge of gold*, the Cross, and other Ceremonies; the *shekels of silver*, the Consecrated Vessels of the Temple; and these being

set up as so many Idols in the Temple, must be all removed before there can be any Peace in *Israel*. Is not this a rare Exposition? May not a pregnant Fancy interpret all these in a different sense, calling the Covenant, the *accursed thing*, which would give Three Nations no Peace till it was removed; may not the *Babylonish garment* be the long Cloak, which hath been made a Covering for much Rapine, Oppression, and Diffimulation? May not the *wedge of gold*, be the great Idol of Presbytery? And the *silver shakets*, the Silver Trumpets that sounded the Alarm to War, and after cried up the great *Diana of the Ephesians*? All which being set up as the *abomination of desolation in the holy place*, must be destroyed before the Nation can be restored to Peace and Tranquillity. If they do not like this Exposition, let them take heed how they offer at the like, since you see an ordinary Wit may wrest such Passages to any purpose.

I shall mention but one Text more at present, that hath been abused by these Interpreters, and that is, that of *St. Paul*, in the 1 Cor. 10. 32. *Give no offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Greeks, nor*
to

to the Church of God. In which words the Apostle exhorted the first Christians to walk so warily and inoffensively, as not to hinder the Conversion of any, that neither *Jew* nor *Gentile* might be kept off from embracing Christianity, or harden'd in their enmity and opposition against it; and the plain sense and use we are to make of it, is to beware that we do not lay any stumbling-block in the way of Christians, or be unto them an occasion of falling.

But what sense do these Learned Interpreters put upon these words? Why, they take Offence there mentioned by the Apostle, not for an occasion of Sin, but for any thing that discontents or displeases; and so would have Superiors take heed of enjoining any thing that may grieve or displease the Godly Party, meaning themselves; and indeed they are so tender, that a small matter will grieve them; yea, if they have not their way, like froward Children, 'twill be hard sometimes to keep them quiet; and so would have, not the Wisdom of Superiors, but their own

Fancies and Humours, the measure of Government. An admirable Exposition to serve their purpose ! and a singular Device to please and propagate the Party ; which is too well known to be farther insisted upon by

Tours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER X.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Dissenters to uphold their Schism, is to promote the Interest of the Party, and to confine the Offices of Kindness and Charity to those of their own Sect. This was likewise the way of the *Pharisees*, of whom our Saviour observ'd, *Mat. 5. 46, 47. That they would only salute their own brethren, and do good to none but such as did do good to them*; meaning, that they made those of their own Sect the sole Objects of their Courtesie and Beneficence. We read of the *Samaritans*, that they would scarce shew the way to a *Jew*, or perform the common Offices of Humanity and Hospitality, but to those of their own Party; and therefore we find, that when our Saviour was passing through a Village of the *Samaritans*, they denied him and his Disciples all Entertainment, *because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*, Luke 9. 52, 53.

A Learn-

Dr. Cave. A Learned Divine hath observed of the *Donatists* of Old, That they confin'd all acts of Benevolence and Civility to those of their Sect; and upheld their Separation from the Catholick Church, by the Artifice of Trade; for they would employ none to Till their ground, or to be their Stewards, but such as espoused their Opinion; and so kept up their Party, merely by Trading within themselves.

And hath not this Device been made use of to the same purpose in our Days? Hath not Interest and Trade had a great hand in our Divisions? Have not some, on whom others depend for their Work and Subsistence, employed none but those of their own Faction? And have not many of the meaner sort been tempted to Separate Meetings, merely to find encouragement from them? May we not see their great diligence in promoting those of the Party to Places of Trust and Profit, yea, in making Matches too, which they generally do within the Tribe, not only to keep up the Old Stock, but to breed a new Race of Dissenters? These things are too common and notorious to need any proof.

Now

Now how serviceable this Stratagem is to support and increase the Party, is easie to conceive; for Interest being the great Wheel that puts the World in motion, that which best promotes and sets that a going, shall be sure to have many Followers: We read of some that follow'd our Saviour *for the loaves*, John 6. 26, 66. and when they failed, *walked no more with him*; and there are many still, that espouse a Party to get Bread; and enter into a seemingly Religious Company, the better to carry on and advance their Trade. We are told of some, *whose gain is their greatest godliness*; and though *no man can serve God and Mammon*, yet these will be serving of *Mammon*, even when they appear the most Zealous Servants of God. Their Teachers too are busie to promote the Interest of their Followers, the better to promote their own; and labour hard to advance their Trade, that they may have the richer Prize, and make the better Merchandize of them. The Apostle makes mention of some *unruly, vain talkers and deceivers, who subvert whole houses, teaching things that they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake*, Tit. 1. 10, 11. and of those he declares, that
 what-

whatever pretences they may make, *they serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly*, Rom. 16. 17. *The love of money*, saith St. Paul, 1 Tim. 6. 10. *is the root of all evil*; and especially of the evils of Error and Divisions; for *while some have coveted it* (saith he) *they have erred from the faith*. This hath made some forward to vent, and others as ready to receive and be carried about with *strong delusions*; and you need not doubt, but many will be still Coining New Doctrines for their Disciples, whilst they can thereby Coin or Procure New Money for themselves.

So that considering what a mighty influence worldly Interest hath upon the Minds of Men, 'tis no wonder that Seducers fish for Profelytes with this Bait, and that so many are caught and led away by it.

But does Christianity allow the restraining our Charity to a Party? No; so far from it, that it extends it to all Men; yea, to our very Enemies; for our Blessed Saviour hath bid us, Matt. 5. 44. *to love our enemies, to do good to them that hate us, and pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us*; this is to shew our selves *children of our Father*
which

which is in heaven ; who causeth the Sun to shine upon all men , and sendeth rain promiscuously on the good and bad , ver. 45.

'Tis a narrow and contracted Charity that is confined to a Sect , which our Saviour sharply rebuked in the *Pharisees* ; *If ye love them (saith he) that love you , what reward have you ? do not even the Publicans the same ? And if you salute your brethren only , what do you more than others ? do not the very Publicans so ? ver. 46, 47.* This is a sort Mercenary and Hucstering Love , that is to be found in the worst of Men , who place there Benefits there where they may have them again with greater advantage ; and serve a Party , only to serve their own Honour and Interest ; which is not to love our Neighbour but our selves , and therefore Christ wills us *to be perfect , as our heavenly Father is perfect* ; meaning , that we should extend our Kindnesses , as God doth his Blessings , upon all Mankind , and avoid distinctions in the common Offices of Humanity and Charity.

Indeed herein mainly consists the evil of this Artifice , that it naturally tends to destroy Love , and to nourish Faction ; for the contracting these Acts
and

and offices of Kindness to a Party, contracts the Heart and Affections too, and shuts out others from any share in it, for none will admit them into their Hearts, who find themselves excluded from theirs ; mutual Conversation and Kindness beget an universal Love and Good-will to Mankind ; but restraining them within the Limits of a Sect, restrains the Bowels too, and may beget indeed a Love to some, but breeds a Hatred and Averſation from many more. This is too evident in Towns, Countries, and Families, to need any proof ; for Experience (which is the plainest Argument) ſhews us how differences in Religion ſowre the Minds, and alienate the Affections from one another. Mens withdrawing in their Commerce, is ſoon followed with a withdrawing in their Communion ; and they that cannot meet together in God's Houſe, can ſeldom meet together in their own. So that confining the offices of Commerce and Charity to a Party, naturally deſtroys the Love that is due to Mankind, and ſerves only to cheriſh a Faction. Yea,

It tends to promote Hypocriſie as well as Diviſion, for many needy Perſons by this means eſpouſe a Sect, not to ſerve God,

God, but the better to help themselves, and become Profelytes, that they may become Favourites of the Party. Thus do they make their Religion truckle to their worldly Interest ; and under a colour of serving God, are all the while serving of *Mammon* ; which is a mocking of God, and one of the vilest pieces of Hypocrisie.

The *Presbyterians* highly blam'd this of old, and proved *Independency* a Faction, by their making use of this Stratagem, for they drew many Proud Ambitious, and Covetous Persons into their Sect, by the hopes of Offices and other places of Profit and Trust ; they made many Profelytes of needy, decayed, and broken Tradesmen, by helping them to live, and putting them in a way to get something ; they encreased their Party, by befriending only such as turn'd to them : This they condemn'd in the *Independents*, as the way to make Men Hypocrites, and shewed them to act not by any Principles of Duty and Conscience, but by the wheels of Interest and Ambition. And may we not see them daily playing the same Game ? Do not the Sectaries increase and strengthen their Parties, by promoting the

(96)

the Trade, procuring of Matches, and many other ways of befriending such as come over to them?

I know you cannot be so great a stranger to the ways of those Men, as to be ignorant of these things. I am,

S I R,

Tours,

A. B.

LET-

LETTER XI.

SIR,

A Nother Artifice of Dissenters to support their Schism, is their working upon the Weakness, the Wilfulness, and the Discontents of the People, to serve their own Ends upon them. This Artifice hath Three Branches, which must be particularly laid open.

The *First* is, Their working upon the Weakness of the People, and making use of their Ignorance to betray them: There are many among the Vulgar, who for want of being train'd up betimes in the way that they should go, have gone astray ever after; and being never well settled in the Principles of Religion, have been fickle and unstable in all their ways: Such as these lie open to the Craft and Subtily of Seducers, and are easily Perverted by them. 'Tis not to be doubted, but that there are many well-

H meaning

meaning Persons, who walk on in the ways of Separation in the simplicity of their Hearts, that were first mis-led into them through the simplicity of their Heads; for so St. *Paul* observes of some, *That by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple*, Rom. 15. 18. Such Men for lack of timely Instruction, remain Children in Understanding, and like them too, are toss'd to and fro from Sect to Sect, and carried about with every wind of Doctrine.

Now 'tis such as these that Dissenters work most upon, taking advantage of their blind Zeal to mis-lead and impose upon them; hence you may observe their Followers to consist chiefly of the Weaker Sex; who being led more by Fancy than Judgment, are the easiest to be drawn into the snare, and the hardest to be recovered out of it. A melting Tone, a whining Voice, affected Phrases, vehement Gestures, and the like, have imposed upon the Weakness of many, who have taken such false Fire for true Zeal, and thought That to be Religion, which is nothing else but Phrenzy or Design.

Now

Now the Evil of this Artifice must be obvious to any, that will observe the dangerous Errors, and monstrous Opinions, that many have been drawn into by this Sleight of Men, and cunning Craftiness, whereby they lay in wait to Deceive; for these Men have strangely imposed upon the Credulity of the Vulgar, and drawn them not only into bad Opinions, but the vilest Practices; and made Treason, Murther, Oppression, and other gross Enormities, to appear abroad under the Colours of Religion.

Such as these make their Markets of what is no way vendible, even the Infirmities of their Brethren; and instead of pitying and assisting their Weakness, work upon it to their Destruction; when they should be Eyes to the Blind, they lead them out of the way, and carry them into Boggs and Ditches: Which should make the common People more aware of these Craftsmen, and take heed how they trust themselves in such hands.

2^{ly}. Another Branch of this Artifice, is to work upon the Wilfulness of the People, and to make use of their Headiness, as well as Ignorance,

to confirm them in their Schism. If you observe it, there are many among the Vulgar, who though weak and ignorant enough, God knows, are yet very wilful and obstinate; they are too wise to learn, and too stiff to stoop to the Wisdom of their Betters. such as these the Dissenters work upon, knowing if they can but get them into their Sect, they have them fast enough; their own Pride and Obstinacy will hinder their return, and harden them against all Conviction; hence the Leaders of the Schism are busy to infuse Prejudices into them against the Established Worship and Discipline, and to instil wrong Notions of both, knowing if they are once entertain'd, they are fixed there, and 'twill be hard to remove them; and therefore they endeavour to heat the Heads of such Persons with a false Zeal, and that will harden their Hearts, and seal up their Ears against Instruction. If these Artists can but draw the Vulgar into an admiration of their Persons or Parts, they then attain their ends, and can lead them where they please; their Errors then shall pass for Oracles; whatever drops
from

from them must be as true as the Gospel, and all their Dictates as uncontrollable as those of the Infallible Chair.

Now the Mischief hereof is too open and visible to need any Discovery; for *Pertinacia nullum dedit remedium Deus*: Obstinacy, is a Disease of the Mind, for which there is no Cure; for it rejects the Use of all good Means, and renders the Case of such as fall into it, desperate and remediless; he that is obstinately addicted to an Error, wilfully shuts his Eyes against the Light, and such a one must necessarily walk on in darkness, till he fall into the deep Abyss of black and eternal Darkness; which should teach all Men to beware of such Leaders, as thus darken the Minds, and harden the Hearts of their Followers, and by both lead them on to the Gulph of Destruction. This will be the Fate of such as receive not the Truth in the Love of it, but are led on to believe a Lie, and carried away with strong Delusions. But there is,

3^{dly}. Another Branch of this Artifice, and that is, Their working upon
H 3 the

the Discontents of People to draw them into the Schism. There are too many in the World, of such peevish and perverse Tempers, that they take pet upon any slight occasion, and, like Tinder, catch fire at every spark. One Man has not the Honour he would have; another hath missed such a Place or Preferment he expected; a third hath received some injury or Affront from his Neighbour; and all these are put out of Humour, and grown Discontented: One Man's Greatness is an Eye-fore to another; some body or other hath anger'd such a Cholerick Man, and he must be reveng'd. But the Misery is, they all seek their revenge upon the Government; if any thing hath disgusted them in the publick Administration of Affairs, they presently make it an occasion of Separation; and whatever happens amiss in the State, makes them quarrel and fall out with the Church.

Now these Wasplish and Cholerick Persons, of which the World affords but too many, are another sort of Men which our Dissenters mainly work on, lending an Ear to their
Com-

Complaints, and improving their Discontents into Separation, they flatter them in the Justice of what they complain of, saying, What pity it is that such good Men should not be employed in the Government; and crying shame that such Worthy Persons should be neglected; and when by this means they have inclined and prepared them for the Faction, they declare their readiness to embrace them, and at their coming, with open arms receive them into it. Thus is their Religion owing to the Ill Nature of the one, and the Subtilty of the other, and the Profession of it, in both, made use of to Countenance what it plainly forbids.

Now how serviceable this Stratagem is to encrease the Party, is easie to observe; for hereby great Numbers are drawn and invited into the Schism; and all ignorant, wilful, and discontented Persons, run into the Faction, as into a Common Sewer; if any become a Malecontent, or Disaffected in the State, he shall soon be encouraged to be so in the Church, and his Religion shall receive a Tincture from the Bitterness of his Spleen: If any

hath Falsified in his Tythes, or been Sued for them, he leaves his Minister, and away to the Separate Meeting, where he is entertained with the pleasing Ditty, *Why should the Parson have One in Ten?* And if he will not depend upon the Good-will and Contributions of the Hearers, 'tis pity he should have any thing: If a Woman hath proved Unfaithful or Undutiful to her Husband, and thereby occasioned any just Offence in the Family, away she goes to the Conventicle, where she is received as a Saint, and the blame laid upon the innocent Husband at home.

In a word; If any for their Ill Behaviour in the Church be justly Excommunicated, or turn'd out of it, they presently betake themselves to the Conventicle, where they who were rejected as great Sinners in the one, are received as great Saints in the other. Thus is the Conventicle the Sink of the Church, where the Refuse and Off-scouring of the one, runs and empties it self into the other.

Now is not this a vile and dangerous Stratagem, that leaves such an out-let and encouragement to all manner

ner

ner of Vice? Must not this take away all the terror of Discipline and Church-Censures, to have such an easie way to be rid. of the Fear and Trouble of both? What Check or Restraint can be put upon Immorality and Vice, when there is such an artificial Method of evading the Shame and Punishment of them?

This is a Matter well worthy of the Consideration of Superiors, to stop this out-let of Impiety, and to shut the door that opens to so much Atheism and Confusion. I am,

S I R,

Tours,

A. B.

L E T.

LETTER XII.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Dissenters to uphold their Schism, is a Pretence to Christian Liberty : And herein they tread exactly in the very steps of the Papists, who call for Liberty, though themselves will give none ; yea, they herein not only follow the steps, but act the part, and promote the very Designs of the Papists ; For did not the *Roman* Catholicks struggle hard for this Liberty, merely to bring about their own ends ? And is it not well known how the Dissenters joined with them, in their Endeavours of taking off the Penal Laws and Test, which would have undermined the Reformation, and established Popery ?

But what is that Christian Liberty these Men pretend to, and call so loudly for ? Why, 'tis a Freedom from the Observation of all Laws about Indifferent

different things in the Worship of God ; or their not being tied up to any other Rules in these things, but such as they in their great Wisdom shall think fit ; hence they persuade the People, that to prescribe any thing in the Worship of God, which he himself hath not Commanded, is an invasion of his Prerogative, and an infringement of Christian Liberty : But hath God any where prescribed the particular Times, Places, Habits, Gestures, and other Circumstances of Divine Worship ? Hath he given any other than some general Rules for the more Decent and Orderly performance hereof ? No, 'tis certain he hath not ; why, then the particular Determination of these Circumstances, wherein this Decency and Order consists, must be left to that Power which Christ hath set up in his Church : For to leave every one to his own Liberty in these things, is a Principle of Confusion, and must bring all manner of Indecency and Disorder into the Service of God.

How then comes this to be called Christian Liberty ? Hath Christ any where Commanded or Allowed any
such

such Liberty in his Church, or exempted Christians from Obedience to Authority in such Lawful and Indifferent things? No; he hath given both his Precept and Example to the contrary; for he was not only Obedient to the *Roman* Power in all Lawful things, but paid all due Reverence and Obedience to the Authority of the *Jewish* Church; he strictly observed the Rites and Ceremonies of the *Jewish* Service, as well those of Human as Divine Appointment; he kept to the Gesture used in Eating the Passover, *Matth.* 26. 20. and punctually Conformed to all the Ceremonies of the Synagogue-Worship.

So that 'tis prevaricating with God, as well as deceiving the People, to tell them, that Christ hath dispensed with all Laws made for the external Order and Decency of Publick Worship, and given them a Liberty to behave themselves in it as they please.

But does not the Apostle tell us, *of a liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free*; willing us, *to stand fast in it, and not to be entangled again in the yoke of bondage?* *Gal.* 5. 1. Yes; but that was a Liberty from the numerous
and

and burthenſome Rites and Ceremonies of *Moses's* Law; which for the number and uneaſineſs of them, are by *St. Peter* juſtly ſtil'd a Yoke, and ſuch a one too, *as neither they nor their forefathers were able to bear*, Acts 15. 10. for their Temples daily flow'd with the Blood of their Flocks and Herds; their Altars ſmoak'd with the moſt coſtly Incenſe and Perfumes; in a word, they were preſcribed to, almoſt in all the Punctilio's of Human Life, and few or no things were left indifferent to them.

Now theſe things being for the moſt part Typical, and only *ſhadows of good things to come*, were all to be done away when the Subſtance came; accordingly at Chriſt's Coming all theſe Shadows vaniſhed like darkneſs at the approach of the Sun, and the cloudy Types of the Law were diſpell'd by the Brightneſs of his Coming.

Now a freedom from thoſe cumberſom Rites and Ceremonies of the Old Law, is the Liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free; and to return to the Obſervance of them, is to be entangled again in the yoke of Bondage.
But

But what is this to Governors applying the general Rules of Scripture about the Order and Decency of God's Worship to particular Laws about it? Here the Ceremonies enjoined are not Typical, as the *Jewish* were; nor is the observing of them a virtual denying that Christ is come in the Flesh, as the continuance of the *Jewish* Rites would be; but are Appointed only for the more comely Worshipping of God *manifest in the flesh*, and the more solemn Praising of God the Father, for that inestimable Blessing.

To observe such wholesome Orders made for this end, is so far from infringing our Christian Liberty, that it would be a great Infringement of it to do otherwise. For,

First; This would infringe the Liberty that Christ hath left with Governours, of Ordering such Indifferent things; this is the main, if not the only Branch of their Ecclesiastical Power; for the Substantials of Divine Worship are already Appointed by Christ, and the Spirit of God hath left some general Rules for the more orderly Performance of it; but the
par-

particular Rules of Order and Decency being no where Prescribed, these are left to the determination of our Governors, whom we are required to *obey for the Lord's sake*; and to deny them this, is to divest them of all Power in Church-matters; yea, this will leave a less Liberty to Ecclesiastical Governors under the Gospel, than the Governors of the *Jewish* Church were invested with; who yet were bound up and determined in far more particulars than ours now are.

Again; To take off our Obedience in these Indifferent things, is to infringe the Liberty of the People, who must be thereby deprived of a better way of serving God, and likewise subject them to the Punishment and Displeasure of the Magistrate, for Disobeying him in things that are within his Power to Command.

But wherein then lies our Christian Liberty, if Governors may Impose what they think fit upon us?

Why, the Governors Liberty consists in this, That they are not tied up to any particular Modes or Circumstances of Divine Worship, but may establish in Indifferent things, what they

they judge most expedient for Order and Comeliness.

The Peoples Liberty lies in this, That they do not look upon or use the things contained in such Injunctions, as Essential Parts of Divine Worship, or Matters necessary to Salvation, but merely for Discipline and Orders sake ; they retain still the Liberty of the Judgment about the Nature of the things, though the Use of them be for wise and publick Reasons restrain'd.

Whereas such a Liberty as sets Men free from all Laws and good Orders of this kind, is a wild and extravagant Fancy, and lets them loose to all Disorder ; this is to use our Liberty as a Cloak of Maliciousness, and to make it a Pretence or Covering for all Licentiousness.

But what is the Design of this false Pretence to Christian Liberty ? Why, 'tis to give the People Liberty to break the Laws at Pleasure, and leave them to the Guidance of their own Humours without Controul ; by this means they teach them to leave the Church, and go to Conventicles to assert their Christian Liberty ; and to
encou-

encourage them therein, they pervert for them two or three Texts of Scripture ; as that of our Saviour, *Call no man master upon earth*, Matth. 23. 10. which is a Caution against receiving the corrupt Doctrines and Traditions of the *Pharisees*, is by them Interpreted for rejecting the Lawful Commands of our Superiors. That of the Apostle, *Be not ye the servants of men*, 1 Cor. 7. 23. which forbids the enslaving the Conscience to the Imperious Dictates of False Teachers ; is so expounded, as to take off all the Obligation of good Orders. St. *Peter's Lording it over God's heritage*, 1 Pet. 5. 3. they interpret of the Tyranny of the Bishops, and thereby take off their Followers from all Subjection to them. So rarely do they Expound their Christian Liberty, which they make use of as a pretence to shake off the Yoke, and evade all Obedience to Government.

Yea, they enlarge this Liberty so far as to think themselves obliged not to do what is Commanded, and likewise to do what is Forbidden, in the Defence of it : So that if the Magistrate should forbid what he would have done, and command what he would not,

I

these

these Men would be caught in their own Snare, and be oblig'd by their own Principles, to do as he would have them.

And yet they stile this humourfome and cross-grain'd sort of Liberty, a Privilege purchas'd for them by Jesus Christ, and a *Depositum* committed to the Care and Keeping of the Christian Church; as if Christ had given them a Dispensation from Observing all good Order, and let them loose to all Disobedience: Whereas such a Privilege is so far from being worth the purchasing, that 'tis much better to be without it; for this would be an Engine of perpetual Discord and Confusion; the Mischief whereof both to Church and Kingdom is too visible to need laying open.

But did these Men who talk so much of Christian Liberty, allow that Liberty to others when they were in Power, which they now claim to themselves?

No, quite otherwise; none were ever more rigid Imposers, and more notorious Infringers of Christian Liberty than they; 'tis well known that they press'd the Covenant upon Mens Consciences with far greater rigor, than any ever did Conformity; yea, those
very

very Men that alledg'd Christian Liberty against Conforming to the Orders of the Church, Compell'd others to take the Covenant with Pike and Pistol, threatening Loss of Life, Goods, and Lands, on such as refused it. I suppose you have heard with how severe and intolerable Penalties they Prohibited the Common-Prayer, and with what merciless rigor they were executed on those that used it. When some put in their own Plea of Christian Liberty for a little Mitigation, they were answered, 'Twas no Impeachment of Christian Liberty to wear those Golden Chains about their Necks: And when they had laid the most intolerable Bonds and Burthens upon Mens Consciences, they told them, that 'twas Prophaneness and Rebellion to say, *Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.* We find one of them commending the Parliament, for endeavouring to fence the Vineyard with a settled *Militia*, to gather out the Malignants as Stones, and to make a Wine-press in it for the squeezing of Delinquents.

But what shall we say of that barbarous Infringement of Christian Liberty, in pressing the Directory upon the Con-

science of their Sovereign King *Charles* the First, which they knew was against it ; they denied him the use of the Liturgy, though he earnestly desired it ; yea, they would not allow him to use any other set Form of Prayer in his own House, though he declared it against his Conscience to join in a way of Worship, where it was wholly uncertain what the Minister would say to God, *hoping* (as he told them) *that they would not offer Violence to the Conscience of their Sovereign* ; yea, they denied him the Attendance of his own Chaplains, to direct and comfort him in his Troubles ; *A piece of*
 Ερωτ. *Rigor and Barbarity* (as himself styles it) *greater than is ever used by Christians to the*
 Βασ. *meanest Prisoners, or greatest Malefactors.* So that this Pretence to Christian Liberty, is a Device made use of to serve their own turn, and to be deny'd to all others ; which plainly shews the Fallacy and Falshood of it. I am,

S I R,

Yours,

A. B.

I E T.

LETTER XIII.

SIR,

ANother Artifice of Dissenters to keep up their Schism, is a pretence to better means of Edification ; this is a Device occasioned by the Ignorance of the People, and cherished in them by the Subtilty of their Teachers. They cannot Edifie (they tell us) so well in the Church as in the Conventicle ; and they Profit more by the Sermons of the one, than they can by the other.

This is a plausible and popular Plea for Separation, and hath help'd much to increase the Party ; for it carries a fair shew of Zeal and Care for their Souls, to look out for the best means of Edification ; none, they think, can blame them if they hear those Sermons by which they Profit most, and follow those Teachers that best promote their Eternal Welfare.

But let us examine what Truth there is in this Pretence ; to this end we must
 I 3 enquire,

enquire, What it is to Profit by Sermons? And who are the most Edifying Preachers? Because there are great and dangerous Mistakes in both.

To Edify then, or Profit by Sermons, is, *First*, To have our Judgments well inform'd in the Knowledge of God, and the Mysteries of the Gospel. And *2ly*. To lead our lives according to it; so that they who most truly and plainly Expound the Holy Scriptures, and best apply them to all the ends and purposes of a Holy Life, are indeed the most Edifying Teachers; and they who most grow in Grace, and the sound Knowledge of God, and abound most in all the Acts of Virtue and a Good Life, are most Edified by the Prayers and Discourses they hear, and are the best Proficients in Christ's School.

Now there is no Church in the Christian World that affords better means of Edification to all these purposes, than that whereof we are Members: For there the Word of God is faithfully Preach'd and Expounded, by which we may be thoroughly Instructed in all Divine and Sacred Knowledge: There all the Articles of the Creed, containing all that is necessary to be Believ'd, are
plainly

plainly and practically unfolded to us, by which we may be built up in our most Holy Faith: There we have the Lord's Prayer, the most perfect of all Prayers, together with other excellent and well-order'd Prayers compos'd by it, daily sounding in our Ears, by which we are directed in all our Addresses unto God, to offer up a Pious, Sober and Well-compos'd Devotion.

There, again, we hear the Ten Commandments frequently Read and Explain'd to us, in the full latitude both of the Precepts and Prohibitions contain'd in them; by which we may learn how to walk in the Whole course of our lives, so as to Please God, and Profit our selves.

In a word; there is no Duty incumbent on us, either with relation to God, our Neighbour, or our selves, but what is clearly opened, and by the most proper and pressing Motives exhorted to: And there is no Sin or Transgression against either, but what we are by the most convincing Arguments dehorted from in the publick Assemblies of the Established Church.

Whereas in the Separate Meetings of Sectaries, the Holy Scriptures are very badly Expounded, and too often very

badly Perverted. The fore-mentioned excellent Models and Abridgments of the Christian Religion, I mean, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and Ten Commandments, are seldom or never rehearsed in the Ears of the People; by which neglect they are carried on and kept in Ignorance of a great part of their Duty. The great Duties of Unity, Peace, and Order, in the Church of Christ, can never be fairly explained or inculcated in those places, where their very Meetings are a contradiction to them. The heinous nature and guilt of Schism must not be laid open, since all their Conventicles are founded upon it. The tender point of Divisions, so sharply rebuked by the Apostle, must not be touch'd upon there, where so many love or live by them.

And now let any impartial Man judge, where we are like to find the best means of Edification, either in the publick Assemblies of the Church, where the whole mind and will of God is truly and faithfully Revealed; or in the Separate Meetings of Sectaries, where the bare upholding of them, tempts them to so much Falsification.

But

But where then lies the Fallacy or Mistake in this Matter? Why the People are imposed upon by false Notions of Edification. For,

First, Some take the fond Opinions and affected Phrases of a Party, for the best means of Edification: Thus if they hear any discoursing of *Election* and *Reprobation*, in which they commonly canonize themselves, and reprobate others; if they saucily pry into and pass their Judgment in those secret things that belong to God, and withal misinterpret the reveal'd things that belong to them, they think themselves mightily edified, though they know nothing aright in those matters. Again; if they hear them talking of *Rolling upon Jesus Christ*, and *Lying flat upon the Promises*, with other such Mystical and Phrase-Divinity, they prick up their Ears, and are wonderfully pleas'd with the unintelligible Jargon. If they happen to go to the Church, and hear the plain Sense of the Gospel laid open, and the true Notions of Justification, Regeneration, Conversion, and Salvation explain'd to them, they think themselves unedified, because they are not amus'd with some fine Conceits about these things. The truth is, the less
they

they understand, the more they are edified; which makes them go to the Church with prejudice, where they are entertain'd with sound Doctrine, and the sober Notions of Religion; and to delight only in the Mystical and Vain Talk of the Conventicle, whereby they mistake the true means of Edification.

Again, *2ly*, They mistake the false Heats of Fancy, for the true Warmth of the Heart; and think they have profited by a Sermon, merely because they were pleas'd. This is a frequent and fatal Delusion, for false Teachers commonly work upon the Passions of their Hearers, without a right informing their Judgment, and so make them think themselves edified, when they are all the while merely deluded: To this end, a melting Tone, solemn Looks, vehement Actions, are made use of; and having by these Arts warm'd their Imaginations, make them believe they are fired with a true Zeal, and so strangely edified, as if they felt some extraordinary Impulses of the Holy Ghost stirring within them, when all the while 'tis no other than the Motion of the Animal Spirits, occasioned by the Heats of Fancy, and are chiefly owing to their
Bodily

Bodily Temper. Now to cry up these for Edification, and going on to Perfection, is (as one hath observ'd) to betray the People into the power of every Impostor, who hath the knack to raise these Heats, and make them pass for Reason and Conviction of Mind. These mortify no Sin, nor improve any Virtue, and so make men neither wiser nor better than they were before, but rather more fickle and inconstant, and apt to be carried about with every Wind of Doctrine. Whereas true Edification helps men to grow in Grace and Knowledge, and leaves more firm and lasting Impressions of Virtue upon the Soul.

Moreover, this pretence to better means of Edification, sets the common People a judging between better and best, of which by reason of their Ignorance and Instability they are incompetent Judges: Indeed there is so much of Humour and Fancy in mens Comparisons between Teachers, that lays them open to Great Mistakes and Inconveniences about it; it fills the best-meaning Persons among them with endless Scruples whom to chuse, and where to go, and is a Principle of great Giddiness and Instability.

Yea,

Yea, the mischief of it is to great to have any Licence or Countenance given to it in any well-constituted Church; for it breaks the Order, Peace, and good Government of it, and naturally creates Division and great Distractions; it sets people a gadding after new Inventions and necessarily brings on the Guilt of Schism.

So that this pretence confutes it self and proves a great hindrance to the Edification it pretends to. He that constantly attends the Prayers and Instructions of his Parochial Guide, shall learn and profit more than he that hunts about for better means of Edification: *A rolling Stone (we say) never gets Moss*: And he that runs after and heaps to himself Teachers, may have his itching Ears tickled, but seldom hath either his Heart renew'd or his Life reform'd by such means.

Again, by keeping close to a settled Pastor, men may have all the Parts and Duties of Religion one time or other explain'd and applied to them; and this will tend more to true Edification, than the Oratory of loose and general Discourses, which for the most part only enters into one Ear, and goes out at the other.

Besides

Besides, this running after new Teachers, is a great Discouragement to a Faithful Pastor, to see himself forsaken of his Flock, and find them following Wolves in Sheeps cloathing: This tends at once to hinder the Preparations of the Minister, and the Proficiency of the People, who might have better, Sermons, and profit more by them, if they would more frequently attend them.

In a word, This wanton Humour of leaving their own Minister, to go where they can profit best, hath been severely condemn'd by the Party that now cherish it in their Followers: Mr. *Edwards* in his *Gangrana* mentions it as one of the great Errors of the Times in which he liv'd: And both *Presbyterians* and *Independents* have inveigh'd against it, as a Principle of great Looseness and Vanity; as may be made appear, if need be. I am,

S I R,

Tours,

A. B.

L E T-

LETTER XIV.

SIR,

THE last Artifice of Dissenters that I shall mention, is, Their setting up and encouraging little private Schools of Philosophy, to prepare and qualifie Persons for the holding of Conventicles.

The Design of this Stratagem is to keep up a Succession of Factious Teachers, and to propagate the Schism to future Generations : There are some Sects indeed that take no Care about the Education or Commission of their Holders-forth, but leave this Office entirely to the Natural Endowments and Volubility of Gifted Brethren : But there are others, and particularly the *Presbyterians*, who being many of them bred up in the Universities themselves, and thereby knowing something of the Method and Benefit of that Education, erect private Schools, wherein they do something to the like, though for the most part to very little purpose : They
are

are sensible of the Necessity and Usefulness of Human Learning to qualify for the Ministry ; and therefore fearing lest their Conventicles might fall, through the gross Ignorance of those that must uphold them, something must be taken care of this way, to fit them for this great Work ; at least, some smattering of Learning must be had or pretended to, to give some Countenance to the Cause : And indeed, a little of it, with a great deal of Confidence, will go a great way to deceive the Vulgar.

They know moreover, that the present Heads of the Party are all mortal, and going off the Stage, and therefore lest the Faction should die with them, care must be taken to raise up more, to preserve the Succession, and derive the Imposture to future Ages.

Besides, the breeding up of these Emissaries, affords no small Gain to the present Crafts-men, and the Leaders are like to get more by their Learning, than the People to whom they are sent, who are in danger to be mis-led by them, and merely beguil'd by their vain Philosophy.

Thus do they erect private Seminaries against the most renowned Universities, merely to qualify them to keep up
private

private Conventicles against the best establish'd Church in the Christian World. Which is a very serviceable Stratagem to uphold the Party, and propagate the Schism.

But for the better understanding of this Device, let us enquire into the Masters and Scholars of these separate Academies, together with the Learning profess'd and taught in them. And

First, For the Heads and Masters in these Seminaries : They are busie not only in sowing Divisions themselves, but in planting of Tares, and watering of Weeds, that may spring up when they are gone, to infest the Church, and choak the good Seed of sound Doctrine preach'd in it : A Noble Employment indeed ! and worthy the Ambassadors of Christ, to be Teachers of Schism, and Promoters of Faction; and not to be content only to divide the Church, and rend the Body of Christ for their own time, but to breed up others to succeed them in this great Work, and raise a new Race of Disturbers, for the Edification of Posterity : They are unwilling the Church should be ever settled in Unity and Peace, and therefore are hard at work to propagate Dissentions, to
instill

instill their Sophistry into their Disciples, and to lay a foundation for Discord on future times.

But if any of these grand Teachers of Philosophy in private Schools have been Graduates in the Universities, as we are told some of them are, How shall we excuse them from Perjury, in violating the Oaths taken by them to the contrary? And if any of them have been Episcopally Ordain'd, according to the Rites and Orders of the Church of *England*, as 'tis well known some of them have been, What can they say for acting thus contrary to the Declarations and Subscriptions required in it, and training up others in Nonconformity and opposition to it? I think it will not be a miss for these Men to consider, whether that tenderness of Conscience, they so much pretend to, can consist with the Violation of those Engagements; or whether it be not either the Weakness of their Heads, or the Falseness of their Hearts, that gives them so easy a Dispensation from observing of them.

As for the Scholars thus train'd up by them, they are plainly nurs'd up in a Schism, and not only taught to go them-

K selves,

selves, but lead others in the ways of Separation; whereby they are bred up Enemies to the Government, both in Church and State, mis-led from the ways of truth and Peace, and so unhappily directed out of the way that they should go.

But what are the Arts and Methods of instruction made use of in these Seminaries to this purpose? Why,

First; They are taught all the little Scruples and Cavils that have been raised against the Liturgy and Discipline of the Church, to beget in them the greater aversion from both.

Next, They are furnished with Seditious Books written against them, to heighten and increase this aversion.

Then they are taught not only to prefer, but to learn the Art of Extemporary Effusions in Prayer, the great Idol and Support of all separate Meetings; to this end they are sometimes put upon the practice, and trying their skill in this Exercise with Directions to assist their Invention, and help their Fluency.

After this they are taught to modulate the Tone of the Voice, sometimes raising it to such a key or degree of Vehemence, at other times falling to such a Cadence,

Cadence, as may best take and work upon the fancies of the People.

These and such like Arts, apt to deceive, are the great things that are taught in these Seminaries: Devices never heard of, or learn'd in any well-established Church, and utterly destructive of all Order and Sobriety in Religion.

But what is it that moves the Dissenters thus to draw from the Two Famous Universities of this Land, and to set up and encourage these private Nurseries against them? Why,

First ; They know that the Education and good Literature of those Places, breed up Youth in a due Conformity to the Discipline and good Orders of the Church; and all that are admitted to them, are by Oaths and all manner of Obligation tied to a firm adherence and observance of them; the wise Instructions and Examples of those Places train them up in the way that they should go, which keeps them ever after from departing from it. So that they whose design it is to promote and propagate Divisions, must keep as many as they can from those places, where they are so well taught and arm'd against them.

K 2

Those

Those Famous Seminaries of Learning and sound Religion, have ever brought forth the stoutest Champions to defend the Truth, and confute the Errors of all times; 'tis no wonder if Hereticks and Schismatics bear no good will to those Places and Persons that so expose and frustrate their evil Designs.

But the better to countenance these private Schools, the upholders of them endeavour to fasten the blackest Calumnies upon our Renowned Seats of Learning and Education; though for their Order and Discipline, together with all other advantages and encouragements of good Literature, they far excel all the Universities in the World, and are therefore resorted to and admired by all Strangers; yet these Sons of Slander seek not only to lessen, but to blacken them too by their foul and Unjust Aspersions; they delight to talk of the Vices and Looseness of those Places, and call those Schools of the Prophets by no better name, than Schools of Lewdness and Debauchery; which is done meerly to beget an ill Opinion of them, and to exalt their little Nurseries of Schism and Sedition above them.

Thus

Thus do they serve the Universities, as they do the Church, throwing all the dirt they can upon them, the better to serve their own ends on both.

Now the mischief of this Device may be easily guess'd from its pernicious influence both in Church and State; for if the Happiness of a Nation depends upon the good Education and Wisdom of its Members, and the hopes of future times are founded upon the well Training up of those that live to them; what unspeakable evils must ensue from these private nurseries of Ignorance and Disorder? Which is a matter well worthy the Care and Wisdom of Superiors to prevent. For

Ever since the Foundation of the Church hath been shaken, things in the State have been out of course; and 'tis in vain to hope for Settlement in the Latter, whilst the Former remains loose and unsettled: And therefore Christ's Vineyard should be fenc'd and guarded, not only against the Wild Boar of the Forest, that would lay it waste, but against all the little Foxes that would undermine it.

To

(134)

To Conclude all ; May the Church of *England* ever Continue in the Purity of its Doctrine, Worship, and Discipline: May the Two Famous Universities of this Kingdom still flourish, to supply it with Able, Faithful, and Learned Pastors: And may Both be so Favoured with the Providence of God, and the Protection of Princes, that the Gates of Hell may never prevail against Either. Which are the hearty Wishes and Prayer of,

S I R,

Your Cordial Friend,

A. B.

A POST.

A P O S T S C R I P T.

S I R,

TH E R E is another serviceable Device of Dissenters, that must not be omitted, and that is, Their settling and maintaining a secret Correspondence between their Brethren in all Parts of this and the Neighbouring Kingdom; whereby they communicate to each other the Designs of the Party, and join in secret Methods and Confederacies to promote them. By this they give and take Measures in Electing Members for Parliament, and preparing Addresses and Petitions to them; hereby they learn and agree in the same Arts of weakening the Church, and strengthening the Conventicle, together with all other means of forming and advancing their Designs.

And these are the more dangerous, because they are carried on in the dark, and like invisible Darts, wound without being seen; as also because they are coloured over with a seeming Zeal for Religion and Reformation of Manners, and carried on with Prayer, and a great shew of *Piety* and *Devotion*.

These things are evident, not only by many former Intrigues managed and promoted this way, but more plainly by a late Letter written to a Nonconformist Teacher, Superscribed thus, *To Mr. Saunders, Minister of the Gospel, in Oxford*; which by a mistake fell into the hands of another Person of the same Name; a true Copy whereof is as followeth:

New-

Newbury, June 7. —98.

Reverend Sir,

I Had a Letter last Week, by the Direction of the Committee of Ministers and Gentlemen appointed at London, for settling a Correspondence of the Protestant Dissenting Ministers and Congregations throughout this Kingdom, for the Advancement of the Interest of Religion, and Reformation of Manners, with the Articles there agreed upon in order thereunto, and a desire to Communicate them speedily to the Brethren in these Parts, that (if possible) a general Meeting might be had this Summer in London.

Pursuant whereunto, 'tis desired that you would not fail to come your self, and bring with you one Prudent Person of your Congregation, chosen for that end (according to the Method resolv'd on at London) to meet several of your Brethren, and the Members of their respective Congregations, here at Newbury on Wednesday the 22d Instant, to consider of the said Proposals which shall be laid before you, and the proper Method to obtain so desirable an end.

You are desired to be here on Tuesday in the Evening, that we may enter on our work on Wednesday Morning, resolving (God willing) to spend some time in Prayer before we begin. I am, SIR,

Your Affectionate Brother,
and Servant in the Lord,

William Taylor,

F I N I S.